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Dynamic Parenting: Ethnic Identity Construction in the Second-Generation Indian American Family

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DYNAMIC PARENTING: ETHNIC IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN THE
SECOND-GENERATION INDIAN AMERICAN FAMILY

by

CYNTHIA BROWN SINHA

Under the Direction of Wendy Simonds

ABSTRACT

This study explores Indian culture in second-generation Indian American families. For the most part, this generation was not socialized to Indian culture in India, which raises the question, how do parents maintain and teach culture to their third-generation children? To answer this question, I interviewed 18 second-generation Indian American couples who had at least one child. Rather than focus on how assimilated or Americanized the families were, I examine the maintenance of Indian culture. Instead of envisioning culture as a binary between “Indian” and “American,” second-generation parents often experience “Indianness” and “Americanness” as interwoven in ways that were not always easily articulated. I also explore the co-ethnic matrimonial process of my

participants to reveal the salience of Indian-American identity in their lives. A common experience among my participants was the tendency of mainstream American non-Indians to question Indian-Americans about India and Indian culture. My participants frequently were called upon to be “cultural ambassadors” to curious non-Indians. Religion served as a primary conduit for teaching Indian culture to third-generation children. Moreover, religion and ethnic identity were often conflated. Mothers and fathers share the responsibility of teaching religion to third-generation children. However, mothers tend to be the cultural keepers of the more visible cultural objects and experiences, such as, food, clothing, and language. Fathers were more likely to contribute to childcare than housework. The fathers in my study believe they father in a different social context than their fathers did. By negotiating Indian and American culture, fathers parent in a way that capitalizes on what they perceive as the “best of both worlds.” Links to the local and transnational community were critical to maintaining ties to other co-ethnics and raising children within the culture. Furthermore, most of the parents in my study said they would prefer that their children eventually marry co-ethnics in order to maintain the link to the Indian-American community. Ultimately, I found that Indian culture endures across first- and second-generation Indian Americans. However, “culture” is not a fixed or monolithic object; families continue to modify traditions to meet their emotional and cultural needs.

INDEX WORDS: Indian Americans, Second-generation Indian Americans, Asian Americans, Ethnic identity, Motherhood, Fatherhood

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CYNTHIA BROWN SINHA

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Georgia State University

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DEDICATION

For my parents, Bill and Becky Brown. I also dedicate this dissertation to my aunt, Peggy Joyce Collins, the first feminist in my life.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there have been numerous studies concerning second-generation Indian Americans (Das Gupta 1997; Dhingra 2007; Maira 2002; Purkayastha 2005 Rayaprol 2001; Srinivasan 2001). In general, these studies conclude that the second-generation children enter adulthood with a strong interest in and attachment to their ethnic identity. As adults, they strive to keep ethnicity central to their identity instead of distancing themselves from it (Min 2002). Typically, in the first-generation family, parents struggle to maintain ties to India and to transfer customs and traditions to children. Second-generation children may experience these traditions as restrictive or see them as outdated, but they do not reject Indian ethnic identity. By young adulthood, second-generation children have negotiated an ethnic identity that is shaped by interaction within a strong Indian American youth culture (Maira 2002; Purkayastha 2005). This identity involves appropriation as well as resistance to American mainstream culture.

Indians -- and Asian immigrants in general -- are physically, culturally, and religiously very different from previous white European immigrants. Min (2002) describes Asian immigrants as maintaining strong ethnic identity and cultural boundaries. How do second- and third-generation Asians maintain or rework these cultural boundaries? Stated broadly, there are two approaches to exploring this question. First, we could employ an assimilation model in which future generations of immigrants become more and more blended into United States society. The cultural boundaries demarcating the immigrant from mainstream culture become porous or simply disappear. Alba and Nee (2003) believe this approach to be most relevant, as assimilation is the unintended consequence of the pursuit of "success" in the United States. The second approach is that the cultural boundaries remain and United States society appears more

pluralistic. Min (2002) states that assimilating into United States culture does not have to entail a zero sum model of acculturation (p. 158). I advocate for this latter approach. Dhingra (2007) and Purkayastha (2005) have also focused on the ways that second-generation Indian Americans revitalize and maintain Indian culture in their lives.

Instead of applying assimilation theory in such a way as to understand how the second-generation Indian Americans are becoming more American (read: less Indian), I suggest a focus on “Indianness.” If Indian culture remains important to second-generation adults, then how do they interpret an ethnic identity in the United States? What are the cultural objects and experiences they employ that create difference from mainstream American culture? The cultural objects and experiences that this generation values or gives meaning to is the “culture” that they maintain in their families with third-generation children.

Through my involvement with the Indian American community, I observed that my second-generation Indian American family and friends were raising their children with strong ties to the community. Indian culture remained salient in their lives. For the most part, this group was never socialized to Indian culture in India. Their third-generation children appeared very similar to the second-generation in regards to language, clothing, religion, and, simply stated, basic knowledge of Indian culture. Thus, I became intrigued with the ways the second-generation interweave Indian culture with American mainstream culture in an almost seamless fashion. Some studies on this generation, namely Purkayastha (2005), left me with the impression that the second-generation Indian Americans constantly negotiate ethnicity. Thus, I envisioned as parents they would be constantly sifting through Indian cultural objects and experiences in an effort to teach their third-generation children “authentic” Indian culture. However, my study did not support this assumption. Rather I found, as parents, the second-

generation Indian Americans do not cognitively travel across a strict binary of two cultural “worlds”; family culture is more integrated.

To explore the ways the second-generation Indian Americans shape the family’s culture to maintain an Indian ethnic identity for their third-generation children, I conducted a study involving 18 couples (36 individuals). From the interview data, I developed broad themes concerning Indian culture in the second-generation Indian family. The parents in my study portrayed a cohesive family culture that reflects the interplay between the American mainstream culture and their ancestral culture.

My study differs from previous studies on second-generation Indians in two important ways. First, in general, other studies tend to emphasize the public domain in exploring ethnic identity. Commonly, employment or university settings are interwoven with family life. Although I did relate the public and private space within the narrative of my participants, my primary focus was the home or private site. In this way, I explored, in-depth, the importance of Indian culture in the family, rather than the direct interplay between Indian Americans and non-Indians. Second, my study focuses specifically on parents. The importance of Indian culture is understood through the family’s culture that they construct for their third-generation children. When parents create predictable cultural routines, they create a framework in which to communicate “a wide range of sociocultural knowledge” that can be “produced, displayed, and interpreted” by children (Corsaro 2005: 19).

ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION

The remaining sections of this chapter address relevant literature for my study. First, I review terminology and concepts that other scholars have utilized in similar studies. Also

included is a review of the existing research on first- and second-generation Indian Americans. Last, I introduce the theoretical framework that guided the analysis of the interviews. The organization of this dissertation centers on key ways second-generation Indian American parents perceive an ethnic identity and the family culture they create and maintain for third-generation children.

In Chapter Two, “Methods and Analysis,” I explain how I identified my participants and the interview process. While living with my mother- and father-in-law for approximately a month in 2007, I interviewed half of my participant sample. I discuss how this somewhat ethnographic experience significantly influenced my analysis. Last, I discuss the grounded theory methodology I used to analyze the interview transcripts.

In Chapter Three, “Marriage Tales,” I explore the circumstances surrounding how each couple met and then ultimately made the decision to marry. This chapter explores the importance of marrying a co-ethnic to maintain ethnic identity. Interestingly, participants did not tend to explicitly state their preference for marrying a co-ethnic. That is, they did not begin their narrative by explaining that they always intended to marry a co-ethnic. Instead, they tended to focus on the circumstances of how they met their future spouses and the degree of parental involvement in their marital process. Marriage maintains links to the Indian American community and more importantly provides the appropriate social space for raising children within the Indian culture.

In Chapter Four, “Playing the Cultural Ambassador,” I focus on participants’ discussion of their experiences with racism and their perceptions of mainstream American perceptions about India and Indians. Participants said they were constantly asked questions about Indian culture by

non-Indians. I explored how they felt about these questions as well as how they responded to them.

In Chapter Five, “Religion: Community and Identity,” I examine the role of religion in the ethnic identity construction families. The majority of my participants identified as Hindu. Regardless of whether or not they considered themselves “religious,” all the participants saw Hinduism as an important part of their ethnicity. Both mothers and fathers used religion as a conduit to transfer Indian traditions to third-generation children as well as a connection to the Indian American community.

Chapter Six, “Intensive Mothering,” explores the intersection of mothering and family culture. Research has already established that women are the cultural keepers in the family (Das Dasgupta, Dasgupta 1996; Espiritu 2001; Kurien 2004). However, my research takes this conclusion one step further by examining the specific ways in which Indian American mothers are responsible for maintaining and teaching children crucial objects such as food and language. The second-generation Indian American family demonstrates gendered patterns in the household not unlike mainstream American households. I use Hayes’s (1996) concept of intensive mothering to capture not only these gendered patterns, but the cultural aspect as well.

Chapter Seven, “Active Fathering,” explores fatherhood in the second-generation family. The fathers in my study believe that they are fathering in a different context than their fathers. First-generation fathers were faced with more challenges and concerns than my participants. The fathers in my study demonstrate a blend of the first-generation family’s culture with American approaches to parenting. First, fathers adjusted their parenting from the more restrictive style of their parents. Though they did not always contribute as much as mothers to housework, they were actively parenting, with many reporting high levels of childcare tasks. This more egalitarian

approach to parenting was also demonstrated by what they saw as more expressive communication style with their children. In a second-generation family, parent-child interaction was more likely to be reported as family activities.

In Chapter Eight, “Parenting Culture: Connecting with the Community,” I explore the ways Indian culture is integrated in the second-generation family through community involvement. “Community” is represented by involvement in the local social network of Indian Americans as well as the transnational community in India. Additionally, the holidays that families observe revealed connections to the Indian community and mainstream culture. Lastly, I explored second-generation parents’ marriage preferences for their children.

Chapter Nine is the conclusion. The preceding chapters are linked together to illustrate my overarching theoretical summary of the data. Using a post-structural lens, I explored my participants’ perceptions of American and Indian cultural discourse. My findings are not intended to be the complete and comprehensive model of ethnic identity in the second-generation Indian American family, but rather an image of how families integrate culture across the public and private spaces. More specifically, my participants have created a multi-dimensional habitus that comprises the family’s culture. Additionally, I discuss directions for future research based on my findings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Immigration History

Indian immigration to the United States had two distinct phases. Roughly speaking, the first phase occurred around 1900 and the second phase occurred in response to the 1965 Immigration Act. The first Indians to migrate were primarily unskilled labor recruited for the

railroads, agricultural, and lumber industries. These immigrants were men without families and mostly Sikhs from the state of Punjab, but also from Bengal, Gujarat, and Uttar Pradesh (Rangaswamy 2000). Typically, they were contract workers who were not permitted to have family accompany them to North America. These men were expected to perform the work and return to India. Canada was the first destination for these workers. In response to this sharp influx of migration from India, Canada changed its immigration laws in 1907 to end Indian immigration. Thus, Indians traveled to the United States in search of work. Between 1907 and 1920, approximately 6,400 Indians immigrated and settled in California. As with other Asian groups, the Indian immigrants were men (Hess 1998).

Despite the fact that the majority of Indians were Sikh, in the United States they were identified as simply “Hindus.” All immigrants from India were not identified by a geographic label, but rather by the generic religious label of “Hindu.” In the early 1900s, a large number of Indians were concentrated in the lumber industry in the northeastern United States. Feeling the competition, native whites physically forced approximately 700 Indians across the border into Canada. Indians faced racism from the earliest immigration. Indians were depicted as “dark and mystic race” in newspaper articles (Hess 1998: 111). Moreover, as Indians worked alongside other Asians laborers, they were generally paid a lower wage. With mounting anti-Indian sentiment, Indian immigration was drastically curtailed. From 1911 through 1920, there were as many Indians returning to India as immigrating to the United States. During this time, social adjustment was difficult. Indians created strong, albeit small communities. They retained their native culture, illustrated by wearing traditional clothing and building small temples (Hess 1998).

After World War I, in response to anti-Japanese sentiment, the Ozawa decision of 1922 determined that because East Asians were not Caucasians. Japanese were not eligible for

citizenship and thus could not own land. Initially, Indians were not concerned about this decision because they thought it would differentiate them from East Asians. Amidst growing anti-Asian sentiment, Asian Indians hoped to become United States citizens and own land. Anthropological race categories place Asian Indians as non-white Caucasians, but socially, mainstream American society lumped them in with all Asian groups. Through this racial loophole, many Indians applied for and were granted citizenship. The policy was not universal, and in 1923, Bhagat Singh Thind, an Asian Indian, took the matter to court. In the 1923 case of *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind*, the Supreme Court ruled that a Caucasian was a “common man’s” understanding of a white person. As a result of this case, many Indians were actually stripped of United States citizenship. Also occurring during this time were small pockets of revolutionary activity. A few Indians in the United States were speaking on behalf of a free and independent India. Britain pressured the United States to squelch this activity. The British government was concerned that Indians in the United States were organizing for an independent India; Bhagat Thind was thought to be a part of this movement. The decision to deny citizenship to Indians might have been politically as well as racially motivated. In the face of this decision and increasing anti-Asian racism, immigration slowed and, by 1940, only approximately 2,400 Indians lived in the United States (Rangaswamy 2000).

During the first part of the twentieth century, the majority of Indians lived in California and experienced a “circuitous” assimilation (Hess 1998: 123). Because Indians were most physically similar to Mexicans and socially marginalized like them, many Indian men married Mexican women. Thus, assimilation occurred via the Mexican-American community. However, Hess (1998) notes that approximately half of the Indian men living in the United States remained

single. The Indians who immigrated after 1965 did not blend with the small Indian community that continued to exist in California (Khandelwal 2002).

In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Immigration and Naturalization Act which lifted restrictions on immigration from Southern Europe and the eastern hemisphere. The act included a provision to reunite families. Specifically, the act was intended to reunite white European families. Congress did not anticipate a significant increase in Asian immigration because there simply were not that many Asians in the United States. However, the act also included a provision for the immigration of professionals, such as doctors and engineers. This provision opened the door for Asian immigration. Asian professionals and students (primarily Ph.D. bound) immigrated, achieved residency, acquired citizenship, then made arrangements for their immediate families to join them in the United States (Kitano and Daniels 2001). The Indians immigrating in the late 1960s and early 1970s came of age in an independent India. They were raised with the nationalistic ideals of the political parties of Gandhi and Nehru, thus they believed their stay in America was only temporary and that they would return to India upon the completion of university studies, accumulation of money, or both. However, “success” combined with a growing number of Indians in the United States made returning to India less likely. Because most Indians learned English in schools based on the British education system, Indians found it easier to acclimate to American culture than did other Southeast Asian immigrants. The legacy of colonialism gave Indians an overwhelming advantage both professionally and socially (Rangaswamy 2000). Today, in India, many of the top engineering and medical institutions are structured on the American style university system. Moreover, students at the top universities receive their instruction in English.

Under the family reunification provision of the 1965 Immigration Act, the Indians who immigrated in the late 1960s and early 1970s sent for extended family members during the 1980s. However, the second wave of Indian immigrants were not college educated professionals or graduate students (Kibria 2000; Rangaswamy 2000). These family members (brothers, brothers-in-law, or uncles) found economic niches in more labor-intensive occupations such as taxi driving and convenience store ownership.

Assimilation Theory

To begin the discussion, the terms “race” and “ethnicity” require definition. In Western vernacular, race generally refers to a group of people who share similar biological traits, such as skin color and facial features. Moreover, we think of racial categories as “something fixed, concrete, and objective” (Omi and Winant 1994: 54). Theoretically, I rely upon a succinct, but comprehensive definition of racial formation from Omi and Winant (1994). Racial formation is “the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed” (p. 55). This definition captures the constructionist view of racial categories. At the same time, we must also acknowledge that people generally associate essential qualities with racialized characteristics.

Ethnicity is related to race insofar as racial categories are associated with particular ethnic characteristics. Gordon (1964) refers to ethnic groups as a “type of group contained within the national boundaries of America” (p. 27). He further clarifies the term to refer to boundaries established by race, religion, or national origin or some combination of these categories. Race and ethnicity are frequently conflated, with ethnicity being defined more fixed or non-negotiable terms. Omi and Winant (1994) define ethnicity as comprising a culture that

includes religion, language, nationality, and political identification, while descent refers to the hereditary aspect of ethnic groups. The latter cultural definition prevails in current vernacular. In general, people tend to think that ethnicity has a hereditary component (Waters 1990). The cultural component of ethnicity is constructed by individuals and families. While there are certainly generalities or common themes of ethnic identity, one universal meaning of ethnicity is difficult to construct. Alba and Nee (2003) provide a conceptual definition of ethnicity as a social boundary or distinction that individuals make in their everyday lives that shapes their action and mental orientation toward others. This distinction is embedded in a variety of cultural and social norms, values, and beliefs, etc. that contribute to groups seeing the differences among one another (p. 11).

Classic assimilation theory, in rudimentary terms, views assimilation of immigrant groups into United States dominant culture as a straight line trajectory. Gordon (1964) views assimilation as a multi-stage process (p. 70). His seven-stage model includes acculturation and adaptation stages with the ultimate goal of assimilation into the core culture and society.

Gordon's model implies that the immigrant supplants his or her native culture for the host culture. Alba and Nee (2003) highlight the ethnocentric aspect of Gordon's model by noting that it is possible for the immigrant group to incorporate successfully into society on a cultural basis other than that of the white Anglo-Saxon protestant mainstream culture (p. 4). In other words, an ethnic identity does not necessarily need to be obliterated in the process of assimilation, nor is the process always unidirectional. Immigrant groups develop economic niches that create opportunities for other members of the group to acculturate to the dominant group. Immigrant groups can choose to live in an ethnic social and cultural matrix without "losing their culture."

Segmented assimilation, a perspective outlined by Portes and Rumbaut (1996), describes acculturation to one strata of society. Thus, the resources of the first-generation parents more or less dictate the opportunities available to second-generation children. Ultimately, assimilation will occur via a particular social context and will not be uniform throughout the immigrant group (p. 248). Alba and Nee (2003) provide a working definition of assimilation as the “decline” of ethnic differences insofar as they lessen in salience within everyday life (p. 11). Additionally, they say assimilation is “eased” when the immigrant group does not experience a rupture between native culture and participation in mainstream American culture (p. 11). An example of a rupture might be characterized by isolation from native culture.

Often classic assimilation theory is criticized for being too ethnocentric because the agency of the immigrant is negated. Members of the dominant group may cognitively evaluate the immigrant in terms of, “How American are you?” Mainstream American society expects the immigrant group to prefer to assimilate into the dominant group rather than maintain ethnic customs and norms. Alba and Nee (2003) do not believe assimilation need be a negative outcome. Striving for “success” in the United States, individuals frequently do not see themselves as assimilating; the process is invisible. Thus, assimilation is the “unintended consequences of practical strategies and actions undertaken in pursuit of familiar goals” (p. 41). These common goals include viable employment, a good home, education for children, and an active social life. When framed in this way, Indian Americans, in general, demonstrate a high level of assimilation. The first Indian immigrants after the 1965 immigration law were highly educated and proficient in English. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the median household family income was \$70,708 for Indian Americans as compared to \$48,500 for Whites. An overwhelming 69 percent Indian Americans have earned college degrees as compared to 25

percent of Whites. Moreover, the percentage of Indian Americans with college degrees is approximately 20 percent higher than other Asian American groups. However, assimilation is a complex process that cannot be captured simply with measures of household income and education attainment.

Many researchers of the post-1965 immigrants assert that this linear theory of assimilation was appropriate when applied to the wave of European immigrants of the early 1900s, but not appropriate for the post-1965 wave of immigrants (Min 2002; Ragaswamy 2000; Zhou 2001). Ragaswamy (2000) notes some specific ways Indians differ from early European immigrants. First, Indians are not immigrating due to unemployment and destitution in India. Essentially, they come to the United States for education and professional opportunities. India produces highly accomplished professionals who view immigration to the United States as a way to provide access to salaries and work conditions commensurate with their occupational prestige. Financial success in the United States facilitates easier travel between the two countries. Unlike early nineteenth century immigrants, contemporary Indians Americans tend to make frequent trips back to India. Additionally, they host foreign parents and grandparents in the United States for extended periods of time. The third differentiating characteristic of recent Indian immigrants is that they utilize technology to facilitate real-time audio and video communication with friends and family in India. In summary, Indian Americans are not cut off from Indian culture in India.

Zhou's (2001) research indicates that assimilation outcomes are dependent on three factors. First, the size of the ethnic community and social networks are highly correlated with an immigrant's "success" in the United States. Not only does the community provide continuity in ethnic traditions from the country of origin and the United States, it provides necessary social support to adapt and negotiate the new culture as well. This support might be purely financial or

may include employment and housing assistance. Second, assimilation is dependent on the immigrant's rank in the current racial hierarchy in the United States. Assimilation is impeded as the immigrant group moves further from the dominant group (i.e. whites). Assimilation is a two-way process that involves adaptation to the host culture as well as acceptance by the dominant group. Racism in employment and housing will impede an immigrant group's upward mobility and maintain segregated ethnic enclaves in urban areas. The third factor affecting assimilation outcomes concerns the amount of human capital or social class standing of the immigrant. As previously stated, Indians arrived in the United States with substantial human capital. Upward social class mobility accelerates assimilation. At the same time, higher class standing also facilitates more ethnic options, such as trips to India.

Identity

As a concept, *identity* is understood as the discourses of self (Quashie 2004). In postmodern thought, identity is seen as fluid and contingent on current cultural systems rather than on biological traits (Hall 1992). Each subject has not simply one identity, but many socially constructed identities. Frequently, through the life course, identities are not only contested in society, but within ourselves as well. On the individual level, identities can be imagined as constantly in flux because, in part, we construct them from the ways in which we imagine others see us. Hence, identity is not a fixed unchanging "thing" (though we talk about it as though it is). We are always articulating our identity. Hall (1992) describes the process as "identification" to indicate that we do not achieve a finished identity.

Identities are demarcated by borders that differentiate those who belong and those who do not. That is, there are borders demarcating gay from straight, or immigrant from American, to

name just two. The social location of the border is contingent on who determines the meaning of membership (Yuval-Davis, Anthias, and Kofman 2005: 521). While the borders represent difference, this difference is not an arbitrary categorization but, a hierarchal arrangement. In other words, innocuous categories, such as colors, are arbitrary categories of difference. Categorical differences, such as race, are a hierarchal arrangement that represents the power differential within society (Gupta 1990). Thus, identity is political as long as there is a direct association with one's membership in certain "categories" and political outlook in a particular society (Tzedek 2005). Identity politics determine whether membership represents privilege or oppression and the degree of privilege and oppression in a particular social context.

The notion of "ethnic identity" comprises immigration status as well as a placement within the United States racial and ethnic hierarchy. Phinney (1996) describes ethnic identity as the process of constructing an identity that represents a sense of the connection and belonging to one's ethnic group. Ethnic identity is a process of ongoing positive "evaluation" of the ethnic group demonstrated through a desire to learn about the native culture as well involvement in cultural activities (p. 145). However, identification is also a complex process of "resistance" and "replication" (Pyke and Dang 2003). Individuals may appropriate culture based on the perception of the social placing of their ethnic group within in the host culture. Cultural objects stigmatized by the dominant group may be less likely to be maintained in the United States

Religion

Religion represents an integral component of ethnic identity construction (Kurien 2004; Min 2010; Williams 1988). It provides a sense of community as well as a way in which to transfer cultural traditions and values to children. In the United States, building a community

based on religious practice is generally deemed acceptable to the dominant group (Kurien 2004; Williams 1988).

“Western responses to Hinduism have been varied, complex and ambivalent, ranging from romantic admiration to ridicule,” says Sugirtharajah (2003: ix). Westerners may study and strive to emulate such religious practices as yoga and meditation, while also ridiculing Hindus for worshipping cows and monkeys. The West holds many misconceptions about Hinduism.

The term “Hindu” is an ancient Sanskrit term referring to people inhabiting a geographic region. Thus, the term referred to a region not a religion. The people living in the Hindu region were a diverse group with different languages, social practices, and “modes of worship” (Sugirtharajah 2003). The use of the term “Hindu” as a “religious identifier” was widespread by the mid-1800s. Under colonial rule, Indians were required to state a religion for the British census (p. x). As a religious identifier, “Hindu” masks very diverse religious practices. For example, two people labeled “Hindu” may worship different deities (Vishnu, Shiva, or Krishna), practice different modes of worship, and engage in entirely different social practices.

Frequently, immigrants become more religious or participate in more religious activities after arriving in a new country. Religion represents a powerful unifier because it transcends ethnic origins. Immigrants come from different states in India, such as Gujarat or Punjab, but all build a community based on generic Hindu practices. In the United States, the Hindu community subsumes variations of religious practices under a universal label of “Hindu.” Kurien (2004) states that as the religious communities become important in the lives of recent immigrants, the differences between religious practices become minimal. Moreover, Indian Americans are aware that Americans tend to homogenize Indian ethnic differences.

Indians Americans rework Hinduism to create a strong religious ethnic bond among many Indian living in the United States. Kurien (2004) argues that these religious connections provide a sense of community and are also a manner in which Indians “manufacture” an ethnic identity. As a basis for ethnic identity construction, this “reworked” Hinduism may be more palatable to the dominant group (p. 282). Although Hinduism is a marginalized religion in the United States, the reworked version is more similar to Western religions than Hindu practices in India. While exposure to American culture is somewhat responsible for this reworking, another cause is the lack of formally educated religious leaders. In the United States, occasionally a senior family member will assume responsibility for teaching and practicing Hinduism in the home (Williams 1988).

United States multiculturalism policies are intended to promote ethnic appreciation and eventually integrate communities, but instead strengthen “immigrant attachment to the ancestral homeland and give rise to ‘diasporic nationalism’” (Kurien 2004: 362). Hinduism has transcended spiritual ideology to become a national identity and thus is very influential in developing this “diasporic nationalism.” Hinduism as a national identity actually began under colonial rule in India as a way to unite people against the British. Increased immigration, migration and technological advances in global communication have more or less united Hindu nationalists across Indian diasporas. The Hindu movement has adopted the term, “Hindutva” which means “Hindu-ness,” but it is not a religious term as much as a political ideology (Sugirtharajah 2003). This movement views India as the Hindu homeland and does not include Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains as these are all considered indigenous religions. Christians and Muslims in India are excluded because they are considered “foreigners,” but in fact both groups have existed in India for hundreds of years (Kurien 2004). The Hindu movement glorifies

Hinduism and Hindu culture, stresses Hindu unity, defends Hindus against discrimination, and the pressure to convert to other religions (p. 369). Hindutva promotes Hindu nationalism among Indian Americans. While a majority within India, Hindus are a religious minority in the United States and to mainstream American society, Indian Americans are racially ambiguous (Kibria 2000; Kurien 2004). Not only are Indian Americans floating somewhere between “white” and “black” anthropological race categories, but they are often times confused with American Indians or native Americans. For mainstream America, even the term “Asian,” is not always recognized as an appropriate label (Kurien 2004: 374). Consequently, United States multiculturalism policies inadvertently encourage Indian Americans to unite around a Hindu nationalist identity. Hindutva groups and politics, originally developed in India, are carried to the United States via immigrants, migrates, and global communication. In mainstream United States, second-generation Indian Americans are not always accepted as “just American” by their non-Indian peer groups. Thus, Hinduism facilitates a sense of community and belonging.

Indian American Family

Exploring ethnic identity construction within Indian American families requires an understanding of the culture and conduct of families in India (LaRossa 1988). First-generation Indian immigrants sought to transfer to some degree Indian family norms and values to their second-generation children. Current research indicates that globalization is changing the conduct of Indian families. Gender relations are slowly becoming more egalitarian, but the cultural ideology is somewhat lagging behind actual family behavior. For many Indians, gender patterns are steeped in religion. Ancient Hindu scriptures and literature shape gender expectations in society. Women are glorified as nurturing mothers in scriptures, while men are dominant

providers or breadwinners of the family. Familism reinforces women's role as subservient to their husbands and their families. The actions of a pious woman are guided by what is best for the family's well-being. In other words, respecting elders rather than "love" for elders underscores familism. The conduct of the Indian family tends to be conventionally patriarchal with the father considering his most important contribution to be primary wage earner. Fathers may contribute to child-rearing activities, but are not likely to contribute to housework (Ramu 1987).

The construct of motherhood in India differs from Western constructs of motherhood. Firstly, pronatalism and family duty are an integral component of feminine identity. A "good" and pious woman is devoted to her children, husband, and aging elders in the family. Secondly, Indian culture emphasizes the importance of family; autonomy is not encouraged. Historically, Eastern cultures promote collectivism insofar as Indians are taught to act for the welfare of others and specifically for the well-being and honor of the family. Individual goals that do not directly promote the well-being of the family or are in conflict with the wishes of elders, are considered selfish acts.

For the first-generation Indians, gender patterns remained very similar to families in India (Khandelwal 2002; Rangaswamy 2000). There are a few notable differences, however. First, women's employment outside the home becomes more of a financial necessity in the United States. Also, Indian American families are far more likely to live in nuclear households that are geographically far from extended family than families in India. Consequently, women in the paid workforce often do not have extended family or servants to assist with childcare and other household tasks (Khandelwal 2002). Lastly, first-generation Indian American parents are constantly engaged in transferring Indian culture to American-born children. Daughters receive

an inordinate amount of attention. Not only are girls the cultural keepers, but they are thought to be reflections of family honor (Espiritu 2001; Srinivasan 2001). In other words, a daughter's behavior -- or more importantly, the community's perception of her behavior -- reflects on her family's standing in the community. In the United States, the culture and conduct of the first-generation families might be that the parents are creating even more unequal gender patterns than those in India (Kurien 2003).

Subrahmanyam (1999) found that first-generation Indian American men and women define the notion of "family" differently from each other. Women include elders from their families as well as their husbands' families in their definition of "family." Men are more likely to include only their parents and elders in their definition. This is a key distinction because the cultural expectation is that after marriage the woman becomes part of her husband's family and is responsible for taking care of his aging parents. Familism dictates that the husband's family should be more central in a woman's life than her own family of origin.

In terms of marital relationships, Subrahmanyam (1999) found that first-generation men might say they possess egalitarian marital views, but regardless of work status, men generally felt that household chores and childcare were predominantly the domain of women. Moreover, men expect women to make the career sacrifices to meet childcare needs. This is not to say that men never contribute to the household chores and childcare.

Many first-generation Indian American parents fear the obliteration of Indian culture in the hands of their second-generation children (Das Gupta 1997; Das Das Gupta 1998; Helweg and Helweg 1990; Khandelwal 2002; Srinivasan 2001). Socializing second-generation children to Indian culture is frequently fraught with intergenerational conflict. Second-generation children believe their parents' view of Indian culture is outdated, arguing that customs in India

have changed. Das Gupta (1998) refers to this conflict as the “museum effect.” Parents attempt to maintain antiquated traditions such as the ban on premarital dating. Many of the first-generation parents left India in the late 60s and early 70s and maintain the India of past decades. Parents are nostalgic for the India where they were born and raised (Kurien 2004).

Research concerning second-generation Indian Americans emphasizes the pursuit for “cultural authenticity” through acquisition of cultural objects and experiences (Maira 2002; Prashad 2000; Purkayastha 2005). There exists no “true” Indian identity, insofar as second-generation children do not follow a generic blueprint for “becoming Indian American.” Rather, “cultural authenticity” is negotiated as well as contested within the Indian American community (Maira 2002). Because “culture” is a process, not a stagnant “thing,” these contestations almost propel Indian Americans to shape an ethnic identity (Prashad 2000: 113). That is, Indian cultural objects are not artifacts for the second-generation to discover and incorporate into their identity. Examining “cultural authenticity” is not a search for the “true” Indian, but an examination of cultural discourse that plays out in the social structures of a society.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This dissertation centers on the ethnic negotiations of Indian Americans in the United States. These negotiations are woven with a mix of the American culture and the ancestral culture. What mainstream American society thinks about India, in general, influences the position of Indian Americans in the racial-ethnic hierarchy. The population of Indian Americans has increased significantly since 1965, so this group has an established local history. Non-

Indians have formed opinions about Indian Americans based on their face-to-face interactions and as well as through the media.

In regards to Indian American ethnic identity, it is not unusual to attach bi- or multi- in front of “cultural.” American society uses these expressions as part of everyday vernacular without ever interrogating the meaning. What is understood as “bicultural” identity is not arbitrarily determined (Appadurai 1996). Although this type of expression seems to suggest that the individual’s identity is comprised of two ethnic backgrounds residing together, actually it represents an inherent power dynamic. The ethnic component that creates the dual identity is determined by what the mainstream American society considers “different.” For example, types of foods or family living arrangements might be perceived as “different” by mainstream Americans. Extending this perspective, I became interested in specifically what aspect of Indian American identity is considered different than American culture. How do second-generation Indian Americans perceive this difference to the extent that they shape an ethnic identity that is culturally different from mainstream American identity? Ultimately, their perceptions of “Indianness” influence the family culture that they maintain for their third-generation children.

I relied on a poststructural framework to explain how my participants articulate an Indian ethnic identity. I sought to understand more clearly how the racial-ethnic hierarchy shaped my participants’ perception of Indian American identity. The putative beliefs my participants have about their family culture, reflect the influence of hegemonic Western culture. Gramsci (1971) described “hegemony” as form of control by the dominant group to organize prevailing political, economic, social, and cultural social structures. We internalize these prevailing views, norms, and values, to become our everyday “common sense” thinking. Belsey (2002) uses the metaphor of the “eternal man” who embodies these prevailing norms of good sense and good

taste at any given time to capture the practice of hegemonic culture (p. 31). Thus, when I refer to “mainstream American society” or “members of the dominant group,” in my analysis, I am referring to these prevailing norms and values (i.e., hegemonic culture) within the United States. Moreover, hegemonic culture represents the proliferation of particular perceptions of such social structures as gender, social class, and ethnicity. Ethnic identity stands outside these prevailing norms of American culture, but is shaped by cultural hegemony. The notion of identity implies a “sameness” within its definition of membership (Belsey 2002). There are patterns or a consistency to the particular field of action associated with membership. However, there are differences insofar as how individuals (members) perceive this field of action. Nonetheless, the subject has no way to express him- or herself except through the discourses in society (i.e., language). Belsey argues, “lives are narratable as coherent in terms of the categories language makes available,” Belsey (2002: 51).

Exploring identity involves examining hegemonic practices. Individuals are always articulating a sense of “self” through prevailing discourses in society (Torfing 1999). Constructing an ethnic identity in the United States involves the articulation of these discourses to produce a fixed field of action. Examining the concepts of gender or ethnicity within a society is not a hegemonic practice, but examining the ways that these structures limit or privilege people in everyday life is a hegemonic practice. For example, how mainstream American society views women in India can in turn shape views about arranged marriage or even motherhood with the Indian American community. Identity involves the practice of intersecting one or more dominant cultural discourses. Specifically, Indian Americans negotiate an ethnic identity within a particular context of social relations.

Through this post-structural analysis, I did not develop or generate “new” theory. Instead, my analysis represents theoretical refinement (Snow 2004). My research builds on or extends extant theoretical frameworks. The outcome of this study reflects the “close inspection of a particular proposition with new case material” (Snow 2004: 135). Focusing on second-generation Indian American parents provides a new aspect to exploring ethnic identity within this community. Additionally, I refine assimilation theory by broadening the discussion to include how this ethnic group revitalizes Indian culture within American mainstream culture. Beyond the foundation of poststructuralism, I also employ two more specific theoretical frameworks.

Edward Said’s (1978) concept of Orientalism is a useful framework for examining the cultural dynamic between Western and Eastern historical contexts. Orientalism rests on the notion that there is a social and geographical space called the “West” in contrast to the “East.” Because the West is viewed as modern, progressive, it is considered superior to the traditional and socially stagnant East. Each image defines the other insofar as the West cannot exist without the East. The relational dynamic arises from the necessary juxtaposition of the West with the East (Said 1978).

“In short, Orientalism is a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient,” Said contends (p. 3). As a discourse, Orientalism gives insight into the ways that Western culture was able to manage and produce the East politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period (p. 3). In other words, Western domination is an enduring process that permeates all aspects of human social life.

Orientalism references Foucault's discourse of power and domination. This particular definition of "power" does not necessarily refer to the literal domination of the West (i.e., Europe) over the East, but hegemonic domination (Foucault 1978). By literal, I mean dominance through military action or even physical enslavement, though this type of domination can and does occur. Hegemonic domination is the power to create knowledge and to maintain this knowledge to allow the West to speak about "us" versus "them." Moreover, the West has the power to create the discourse that determines what is modern. This power produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth (Foucault 1972: 194). Cultural hegemony defines social practices such as approaches to matrimony or gender patterns. For example, American society views arranged marriages as an archaic approach as compared to Western "love" marriages. Similarly, Americans tend to be very critical of women in the Middle-East who wear veils. For Americans, veil seems to epitomize gender inequality, though Americans may not interrogate gender inequality in the United States.

Said (1978) mostly referred to the power dynamic between Europe and all of the East (the Middle East, South and East Asia). Recent scholars now theorize about "American Orientalism," where cultural hegemony rests on the conflation of race and ethnicity (Kim and Chung 2005). "West" and "white" maintain cultural domination over Asia and Asian Americans (p. 73). For many Americans, this cultural domination justifies strict immigration laws and anti-immigration attitudes. Thus, native born and white underscore the image of a "true American" and justify cultural and racial "othering" of Asians. Socially, American Orientalism normalizes questioning a person's "heritage." White Americans ask, "where are you from?" to find out the native "country" of the non-white person. For many Asian Americans, this type of questioning indicates their ambiguous citizenship status.

Western hegemony promotes individualism and agency as absolutely critical elements of the social fabric of society (Narayan 1997). Individual thought and free will are Western societal characteristics that are considered superior to the collectivist Eastern philosophies. Indians are considered trapped in a stagnant culture with few individual choices. Therefore, mainstream American society may think that Indian Americans should abandon ancestral culture in favor of more progressive United States culture. But, ethnic identity is not overly determined by society. Individuals negotiate an identity based on perceived rewards or penalties in mainstream society. Orientalism may provide the foundation for understanding cultural hegemony at the macro-level, but many of the cultural objects and experiences associated with an ethnic group are negotiated at the micro-level. More specifically, the family is a key agent producing culture.

I reference Bourdieu's (1980) concept of "habitus" to explain how parents negotiate the family's culture and traditions within a particular field of action. Habitus is a system of dispositions that produce individual and collective practices (Bourdieu 1980: 54). In other words, the habitus makes it possible for us to generate spontaneous "common-sense" and "reasonable" behaviors in the social world. These behaviors are bounded by social and historical conditions of production. Within a particular field of action, we have a repertoire of behaviors that we can employ. We are inured to particular "thoughts, perceptions, and actions inherent in the particular of its production – and only those" (p. 55). We have freedom to improvise in a situation, but we are limited to practices within a particular field of action. Thus, habitus "tends to generate all the 'reasonable,' 'common-sense,' behaviors" possible within that field of action (p. 55). However, we are not totally bounded by structures of society. With each generation we revise and transform the habitus. Within a society, people are capable of interpreting a situation and choosing a "logical" course of action. Consequently, habitus produces and is produced by the

social world. For participants in this study, habitus transformed across each generation. First-generation Indian Americans raised their children with a particular set of cultural traditions and values. Second-generation children grew up in the United States and have merged of American and Indian cultures. They negotiate an ethnic identity from this particular field of action. As parents, they are raising the third-generation children whose habitus will certainly transform again.

Bentley (1987) also utilized the concept of habitus for its explanatory power in understanding how members of an ethnic group understand common patterns of behavior or what is familiar within the notion of identity. By utilizing habitus, essentializing ethnicity can be circumvented. There is nothing innate or inherent about particular cultural objects and experiences such as Indian food or arranged marriage. However, these objects and experiences are familiar and not utilized arbitrarily by Indian Americans (Bentley 1987: 33). I want to avoid focusing on the origin of why this association exists. That is, I do not focus on how my participants create their habitus, but rather examine what my participants explicitly and implicitly describe as the shared components of “Indianness.” This field of action is the result of hegemonic practices of both Indian culture and American culture. However, “being Indian” and “being American” is a false dichotomy because what is understood as “Indian” is mediated by Western discourse. Hence, I employ the Orientalist framework for understanding the subject’s position within these two “worlds.” Creating an Indian American identity does not always entail a conscious resistance or appropriation of cultural objects or experiences based on hegemonic American culture. Participants did not seem to be constructing the family’s culture based on this power dynamic (i.e., resisting arranged marriage). However, the Orientalist framework provides a theoretical device for analyzing difference. There exists sameness within an identity, but a

difference from mainstream society. Taking a poststructural view, I examine how the parents in my study integrate hegemonic American culture--and hegemonic Indian culture-- to shape an ethnic identity for their third-generation children.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

SAMPLING CRITERIA AND THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

This is a qualitative research project involving semi-structured interviews with 18 couples. My sample criteria were rather broad, requesting only that at least one partner be second-generation (born in the United States to first-generation parents) or to have immigrated to the United States before approximately age ten. The other partner could be first- or second-generation Indian American. Additionally, the couple had to have at least one child of any age. Because my focus was on the parents, the age of the child was not a defining characteristic. Moreover, specifying an age would have greatly reduced my sample size and caused difficulty in identifying participants. I included no religious specifications in selecting participants. Census data indicate that the Indian American community has grown significantly over the past 15 years; thus, it is very likely that many second-generation Indian Americans marry first-generation Indian Americans.

I recruited 12 of the participants through convenience sampling and six through snowball sampling. I found that the farther a potential participant couple was from me in social distance, the less likely they would be to participate; so most participants were people whom I knew through my involvement in the Indian American community. Participants lived in Georgia, New York, New Jersey, and California.

Three interviews were conducted with each couple, one joint, and two individual. The average length of the joint interviews was 90 minutes with three of the interviews sessions lasting as long as 150 minutes. Fifteen of these interviews were conducted in person and usually in the participants' homes. Two couples requested to meet in alternate locations. One couple met

me in the home of mutual friends and the other couple met me in a secluded corner of a coffee shop. Three joint interviews were conducted using video conferencing. The majority of people had me over when they were home with their children. While I did not formally interview the children, my field notes include my observations of parent-child interactions. I included my intent to record these observations in my IRB submission. The objective of the joint interview was not only to ascertain the participants' views on being Indian American, but also to elicit their views on religion, marriage, and parenting.

The individual interviews, conducted after the joint interview, averaged one hour (but four of the interviews lasted at least two hours). All of these interviews took place within a week of the joint interview at a location that was convenient for the participant. Thirteen couples did what I refer to as "tag-team" individual interviews. I would interview one spouse privately in the house; once the interview was completed, I would then interview the other spouse. Given time constraints for my participants, tag-team interviewing was often the only way to ensure I completed the interview process. The second interview began after a very brief break. Only once was I aware that couples discussed the interview content during the break. After I posed one question, the participant commented that his wife had told him about this question. He quickly apologized and said he hoped he had not interfered with the research process. For five of the couples, I conducted the individual interviews over the phone.

The objective of the individual interviews was to explore ethnic identity across the life course. Additionally, I probed for differences from the joint interviews as well as for their views on marriage, family, gender, and parenting. I was especially interested in how similar or dissimilar participants thought their parenting styles were as compared to those of their parents. I did not divulge the details from the life course interviews with each partner. However, I did

advise participants that their comments might be apparent to their spouse in future published work.

The interviews were semi-structured (Appendix). I posed specific questions, but mostly probed for the participants' views on the various topics. While I had established specific topics to cover, the interview guide was intended to be just that – a guide. The semi-structured format allowed participants to feel comfortable and dwell on questions they felt were salient to their lives.

Each interview was tape recorded and later transcribed. After each interview, I wrote field notes concerning my general impression of the interview process. Each participant signed and was provided an informed consent form. All participants, as well as non-participating children, have been given a pseudonym.

ETHICAL ISSUES

There are ethical issues surrounding the data collection, storage, and writing in research. The participants were assured that the study would protect their anonymity. Additionally, I avoid any specific reference to demographic information such as geographic location or occupation. In situations where a quotation might reveal a participant's identity, I avoid associating the excerpt with the participant's pseudonym. Instead, I used more generic language, such as "a father" or "a mother."

The participants should be aware of exactly what the research project entails and its intent (LaRossa, Bennet, and Gelles 1981). A common approach to qualitative research is that the analysis and data collection run concurrently; thus, the researcher may add or delete questions from the interview guide. This is especially true for unstructured interviews. The concern is the

power the researcher has to guide the conversation into specific areas of the participant's life. The participant might comply with the direction of the interview probes and ultimately discuss sensitive issues he or she would not discuss outside the context of "research." LaRossa, et al. (1981) explain that this dynamic is exacerbated in joint interviews. The couple might agree before the interview that only certain subjects can be discussed and that other subjects are off limits. While I do not know if such discussions actually occurred, I did find that the couples tended to have agreement on almost all topics. While I did not expect ugly arguments to ensue during the joint interviews, I did expect the couples to talk about areas of parenting that they continue to negotiate. Only three couples disagreed during the joint interview. During the individual interview, I prefaced the topic as, "I'm not digging for dirt in your marriage. I am interested in the patterns across all parents in terms of areas they continue to negotiate." Consequently, ten couples (20 participants) did discuss at least one way they differ in parenting styles from their partner. The other eight couples (16 participants) reported they always agree on parenting. All couples presented an image of harmonious marriages. This display of harmony was demonstrated by an egalitarian dynamic in both their discussions of their marriage and their parenting experiences. While some couples did discuss differences in parenting, none of the couples discussed any problems or concerns about their marriage. In my field notes, I remarked several times how much agreement and harmony existed among the participants.

Another ethical issue involves public and self-exposure. As previously stated, in the published work, it is important not to use details about participants that would identify them to the public. However, details such as the participant's city of residence, religion, or perhaps ethnicity, may be unavoidable and ultimately identify the participant in the published work. Self-exposure involves the possibility that the participant may view him or herself -- or his or her

social world -- differently at the end of the interview session. Moreover, there is the additional risk of “seeing one’s personal life scrutinized and objectified” (LaRossa et al, 1981: 309). I was concerned that specific questions about Indian culture would lead the participant to feel objectified. My research ironically could culturally “other” my participants. That is, my interview process could shape a stereotypical view of Indian culture -- similar to the way I critique mainstream American culture for perpetuating similar view of Indians. Certainly, my participants are aware of being Indian American in the United States and all that that entails. However, some of my topics, such as friend networks or family holiday celebrations, could reveal just one more way that my participants are “different” from mainstream America. Prior to the interview, my participants might not have considered their behaviors or responses remarkable and certainly not necessarily “Indian.”

The reverse self-exposure may also have occurred. In other words, as I probed for parenting styles that indicated whether third-generation children are socialized to Indian culture, parents may begin to feel they are not doing enough. Consequently, the interview process heightens a sense of ethnic pride causing parents to exaggerate how they feel about “being Indian.”

I was mostly concerned about inadvertently “othering” my participants. Wilson’s (2004) work researching the markets in Thailand addressed this particular concern, and I chose to employ her strategy. First, on a personal level, I identified my social position to my participants. Many were aware that I am married to an Indian American, but I reviewed this with my participants as well as my desire to understand and be a part of the Indian American community. If appropriate, I revealed information about my Indian family during the interview process. For example, as participants were describing their wedding, I might offer details about my Hindu

wedding as points of comparison. Second, in my analysis, I attempted to “avoid reproducing racial and national power relations” by being aware of the racial-ethnic hierarchy that exists in the United States (Wilson 2004: p. 27). In this way, I hope my analysis avoids simply recreating Western family cultural hegemony (p. 28).

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC EXPERIENCE

I interviewed nine of the couples over 30 days in the summer of 2007. While I conducted the 27 interviews, I lived with my mother- and father- in-law. For the most part, I lived within their Indian community. My father-in-law is retired and my mother-in-law works at a part-time job. We all quickly fell into a daily routine where my mother-in-law left for work and my father-in-law and I would have our morning coffee. I usually made his lunch. Afterward, I would work until my mother-in-law came home from work and then I would make tea for all of us. Because most of my participants worked outside their homes, most of the interviews were scheduled in the evenings. Frequently, I was invited to dinner, but sometimes I would come after dinner and was invited to stay for wine or coffee after the interview. Spending this time in my participants' home provided me with a wonderful opportunity to observe family dynamics.

During my stay, I also accompanied my in-laws to Indian social events. I experienced cultural patterns rather than simply reading about them. Experiences and nuances of Indian culture were more salient in my research. Gender patterns in particular were more apparent and, more importantly, contextual. For example, I live several hundred miles from my in-laws, so up to that time, I had not actually had to engage in many of the typical behaviors of an Indian daughter-in-law. Although expectations for me were not the same as they would have been for an Indian daughter-in-law, I found that there was nonetheless a subtle expectation that I perform at

least some of the tasks. As mentioned before, I prepared meals and afternoon tea. Traditionally, an Indian daughter-in-law would be very involved with meal preparation. Preparing tea is another activity that is generally performed by the daughter-in-law. Additionally, I was always careful to cover my legs by wearing long skirts or jeans, not because of a religious mandate, but mostly because a “tasteful” married Indian woman covers her legs. If my interview ran late and I would not be home by 10:00pm, I would call my in-laws and let them know when I was returning.

The time I spent with my in-laws greatly shaped my research. The benefits of living in the community are difficult to express. I do not necessarily claim to have “insider status.” As a result of my liminal status, I do believe I have a deeper understanding of Indian cultural experiences than would an outsider.

Insider and outsider status shifts because the researcher’s position to his or her participants is a dynamic relationship (Naples 1996). At times, I am an insider: as a woman, a wife, and someone married to an Indian American. At other times, I am an outsider. Certainly, I am an outsider when I ask questions about perceived prejudice and discrimination. My position as non-Indian and white mostly shields me from prejudice. However, by listening and filling in gaps, as DeVault (1999) would say, I may shift my position to someone who understands, an empathetic listener.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Based on census records, the Indian American population has increased significantly across the last decades. In 1980, the Indian American population was 361,531; a decade later, the population had more than doubled to 786,634. By 2000 U.S. census, the Indian American

population had increase more than twofold to 1,645,510. I was not concerned about locating enough participants. Participants for my study were spread geographically across New York, New Jersey, Georgia, and California. The majority of the couples were from central and northern Indian states such as Gujarat and Bihar. Three couples were from south Indian states. All of the participants identified as Hindu except one father who identified as Jain and two fathers who identified as Muslim. Participants ranged in aged from the youngest, 28 years old, to the oldest, 50 years old. The average age of the mothers was 37 with a range of 30 to 46 years. The average age of the fathers was 39 with a range of 28 to 50 years. Children ranged in age from two months old to 23 years old. At the time of the interview, three couples had only one child, and the remaining couples had two children. The median age of the children was eight years old. Eight couples reported that they view their marriage as arranged. The degree of parental involvement varied from parents overseeing all interactions between prospective bride and groom to merely setting up the introduction and allowing the couple to decide on their own. Ten couples reported they met without any sort of arranged introduction.

Although I did not specifically ask for household income, I believed all participants to be at or near upper middle-class. I base this assumption on prestige of residential neighborhoods, educational attainment, and occupational prestige. Because I had some degree of familiarity with most of my participants, probing into their incomes would have been awkward. Moreover, my participants were very generous to create time in their busy schedules for me, so I wanted to be as respectful of their privacy as possible during the interview process. All participants were either entrepreneurs or other professionals. Additionally, all participants had at least a bachelor's degree; half had earned a master's or higher degree. My assumption concerning participants' social class status is in line with the national average. Indian Americans rank in the highest

percentile for educational attainment. Their household income tends to be higher than the national average.

Of the 18 mothers, six had earned degrees beyond a bachelor's degree. Twelve fathers held degrees beyond a bachelor's degree. Thirteen of the mothers were employed full-time in the paid workforce. Two mothers worked part-time in the paid workforce. Five of the mothers identified as stay-at-home mothers and did not work outside the home. All 18 fathers worked full-time in the paid workforce.

ANALYSIS

The first analytical dilemma was how to examine literally hundreds of pages of interview transcripts. During this phase, "I am drowning in data," was my standard response to well-meaning inquiries about my progress with this project. Eventually, though, I began to make sense of the data by first making simple notes and highlights to sections of the transcripts and my field notes. This first phase of coding involved grouping topics that first resonated with me. As these groupings or topics became more specific, I then went back to the literature to substantiate and give context to the data. Ultimately, the interview data were manageable and a rough outline of overarching "groups" emerged (e.g., religion, mothering, and prejudice and discrimination). Before I could get into the nuts and bolts, if you will, of coding, I spent some time evaluating my analytical process. That is, what am I analyzing here, and why? Given my position as someone married to an Indian American and a woman who runs a household, how does my position influence the outcome of the interviews as well as my analysis? This question is particularly salient when I considered the perspective of the women in my project. In other words, I was more concerned about my status as a woman than my status as a white American.

In exploring family, was I attending to the father more than the mother? I became of aware of the subtleness of my actions in order to evaluate whether I tended to pose more questions to the father than the mother. Basically, my concern was that I was unaware of gender hierarchy. Thus, the gendered pattern of men as head of the household might dictate who was asked more questions on the joint interview. Moreover, when discussing division of labor in the household, did I lead the participant insofar as assuming that the mother performed more chores than the father? Perhaps, instead, given our shared experiences, I was filling in the gaps for women in the interview. More importantly, was my position influencing my analysis? I borrowed from DeVault (1999) to evaluate the “women’s standpoint,” and believe that my gender overall had a positive influence on facilitating the entire analytical process. DeVault (1999) outlines four aspects of work with interview data: constructing topics, listening, editing, and writing.

DeVault (1999) explains that the researcher needs to go beyond social scientific vocabulary to translate women’s everyday experiences. This was certainly true for me as well. I run a household, so I did frame my questions and my participant’s responses within familiar experiences for interpreting household routines. I would laugh or joke in response to the shared experience of “women’s work.” “I have the same experience.” “I know exactly what you mean,” are examples of responses I provided. I believe this empathy not only built rapport, but simply created a common language. As DeVault (1999) describes, there is more to analyze than just words. That is, I identified “kinds of practice and thought that are part of female consciousness, but left out of dominant interpretive frames, shaped around male concerns” (p. 65). Thus, during the coding process, I created categories from shared experiences more than from “disciplinary categories” (p. 65).

When women interview women, the role of researcher and subject can change. In other words, the researcher no longer needs to refrain from ever showing empathy with the participant. It is difficult for women to deny or ignore shared experiences. I can listen as a woman and fill in my experience from time to time. Consequently, women did discuss or delve into details of their lives that perhaps they had not thought about explicitly before, such as interactions with mother-in-laws or how often they specifically prepare Indian food and how they feel about that. DeVault (1999) suggests we delve further into our interview data for not just the “good quotes” but the inarticulate thoughts and concerns. Also, I looked for simple responses or statements such as, “it would be good,” or “it would be nice,” in reference to culture and their children. These kinds of sentences might be overlooked in coding because of their mundane quality. However, I had to listen to the overall sentiments being conveyed because, frequently, my participants did not explicitly outline how they define culture and envision it for their children.

When editing, I had to look beyond a literal meaning of what was said. I may not be a true insider, but through my connection to the community, I have extensive knowledge of Indian American families. Moreover, I am emotionally invested in these kinds of experiences. Hence, I am representing the subject or as DeVault (1999) says, I have great authority as “translator and mouthpiece” for my respondents (p. 75). I am using the actual words spoken, but I am piecing them together for a particular narrative - a narrative that I hope represents the experiences of the participants in my study and maybe others in this ethnic group as well.

When I began writing up my findings, I did feel a responsibility to “get it right,” whatever “right” might be. Constantly, I am working between the formal sociological discipline and my liminal insider status. DeVault (1999) points out that the explicit use of the respondent’s

words are necessary for outsider understanding. I focused on these four aspects of DeVault's (1999) strategies and found that the writing "fell into place."

The objective of my study was to focus on theoretical refinement concerning the construction of ethnic identity in the second-generation Indian American family. I chose to employ grounded theory as my analytical approach for analyzing the interview data, mostly because grounded theory facilitates a "rigorous" in-depth examination of people's experiences. Through coding, the emerging concepts and categories can be "linked to substantive and formal theories" (Ryan and Bernard 2000: 782). There is more than one approach to grounded theory and numerous books and articles outlining procedures as well (LaRossa 2005: 838). I employed coding process outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1998) and further streamlined by LaRossa (2005). My approach to analyzing the interview data does not strictly follow the ground theory methods (GTM) of either Strauss and Corbin (1998) or LaRossa (2005). However, I did conduct open and axial coding. I did not develop selective coding, nor did I choose a core category. Nonetheless, to explain my analysis, I first start with a brief overview of GTM, as I understand it.

Overview of grounded theory method

Open coding involves reviewing the data, sometimes line by line, and asking questions to generate propositions or hypotheses about what is "going on." The objective of this initial step is to generate concepts. Concepts are linked to indicators which are the actual words used by the respondents that indicate action, interaction, or events. Eventually the concepts are developed into categories by understanding the concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions. Categories are a higher level of abstraction representing social phenomena derived from the data.

The label of the category, like concepts, is related to the context of the situation depicted in the data, but more importantly, the label represents the context from the standpoint of the researcher. Thus, open coding involves inductive and deductive processes. Strauss (1987) recommends that open coding continue until the concepts cease to “yield anything new” (p. 25).

Although not necessarily sequential, axial coding can begin once some categories are developed through open coding. During open coding, the researcher is developing categories. How the categories are interrelated is explored during axial coding (LaRossa 2005: 849). That is, axial coding is a process whereby conditions, actions and interactions, and consequences are identified (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 126). This is the stage where structure and process are linked. “Axial coding is the phase at which grounded theory method research begins to fulfill its theoretical promise (LaRossa 2005: 849).

The last aspect of ground theory is selective coding. This stage, like previous stages, runs more concurrent than sequential. “Selective coding is the process of integrating and refining the theory” (Strauss and Corbin 1998:143). Another key component of selective coding is determining the core or central category. The core category has great analytic power and explains the most variation in the other categories (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 146). Strauss (1987), citing Glaser (1978), outlines six criteria for determining the core category (p. 36). In short, the core category must be central, appear frequently in the data and relates easily to the other categories. By focusing on the core category, “the theory moves forward appreciably” (p. 36). The name or label of the core category should be abstract enough that it can be applied to other studies (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 145). Lastly, the core category explains the variation as well as the central point of the data. That is, as the conditions change, “the explanation still holds” (p. 145).

Grounded Theory Approach

In terms of formal methodology, I did not exactly employ Strauss and Corbin's (1998) version, but rather relied more on LaRossa's (2005) version as the foundation for my analytical approach. I began with open coding. In the beginning, I laboriously copied and pasted sentences and sometimes several lines of transcripts into MS-Word files. I grouped these indicators based on my initial perspective of how I believe the excerpts were associated. By the end of open coding, I had moved indicators from one file to another. The files names might be literal as in "marriage: how they met," or names might be more general and vague as in, "perceived prejudice or discrimination." The interview guide influenced my perception or anticipation of my concepts as the questions are structured for a particular probe. For example, because I have several questions addressing religion in the family, I knew that I would have categories related to religion. My theoretical framework guided my analysis in the initial coding and the categories that, ultimately, I used in shaping a picture of the family's culture.

For example, as I coded for indicators that eventually shaped the categories pertaining to marriage, I was perplexed as to how I should articulate the properties. Immediately, I thought in terms of "western" to "traditionally arranged." Clearly, I could not place the marital process on a continuum with these terms. Hegemonic American culture tends to view arranged marriages as outdated and lacking of individual choice. Hence, arranged marriages stand in conflict to American values. Using the term, "love marriage," implies an inherent power dynamic where the Western approach involves "love," as opposed to the loveless arranged marriage. Through the coding process, I noted the level of parental involvement throughout the period leading up to the wedding ceremony. In general, arranged marriage is characterized by the union of two families; parents are involved in setting up the initial introduction of the couple. On a continuum

of high parental involvement to parents not involved at all, I dimensionalized the property of how the couple met. Employing an Orientalist perspective, I also coded for difference in the couple's views on marriage. Did they distance themselves from the tradition of arranged marriage or embrace it? What I found is that no couple appeared to be critical of arranged marriages. The marital process varied by parental involvement. For the couples with the least parental involvement, they did not explicitly state that they did not want their parents to be involved in anyway. In fact, for these couples, parents' views on their relationship mattered to my participants. Pertinent to the marital process for my participants, was determining when to tell their parents about their relationship. Hence, parental involvement impacts more than just setting up the introduction.

"How they met," is a variable or property of "marriage" and "when to tell parents" also. As explained, this variable ranges in terms of parental involvement from high parental involvement to very little parental involvement. The following excerpt demonstrates low parental involvement. This couple is placed to the right of the center or halfway between the middle and the far end point.

Mother: Well, yeah. In the overall big picture, we were pretty open. At first, we started to date in October that year. So it was right away freshman year and then I didn't tell my parents. But they had a clue by November because I think you sent me flowers or something over Thanksgiving break or something like that.

Father: Special friend.

Mother: Yeah. That's right. My mom called him my special friend after that. But by December break, winter break, I brought him home and I went to visit his family and then everybody knew and it was all just accepted after that. Everyone looked at it like boy, did we break ground by just doing that. But I wasn't able to lie to my family. I'm very close to my parents.

This portion of the interview described how this couple began dating in college and eventually shared the status of their relationship with their families. In understanding how marriage occurred parental involvement was minimal. This couple met on their own with no parental involvement. However, explaining that they “broke ground” and that she could not lie to her parents, indicates that parents are usually involved and, most likely, the decision to tell them about their relationship involved serious deliberations.

Other times, a poststructural lens offered a way to explore the influence of hegemonic culture – be it Indian or American. For example, religion involved the interplay of both cultures. Most of my participants identified as Hindu. Interestingly, Hindu Indian Americans generally, do not convert to other religions (read: Christianity). Even though the second-generation Indian American may have lived 20 or more years in the United States, Hinduism remains an important connection to the Indian American community. Thus, I begin to explore religion in regards to Indian culture and identity. Hegemonic Indian culture may influence the likelihood that families maintain Hinduism for third-generation children. As mentioned, Hinduism maintains a connection to the community, but it also teaches Indian culture to third-generation children (Min 2010). Through coding, maintaining Hinduism demonstrated the influence of hegemonic Indian culture, but I also found that Western hegemony influenced the ways that Hinduism was understood within the family. I also searched for “how” Hinduism was practiced in the family. Pujas (Hindu rituals) were reported to be the primary way that participants practiced Hinduism. Through coding, I revealed that participants, unlike their parents, wanted to understand what they were actually doing to satisfy each puja. Focusing on this aspect of Hinduism, I revealed how Hinduism gets reworked to be practiced more like religions in the United States than Hinduism in India.

I continued coding until theoretical saturation and until I began to see overall patterns across all of the families. Of course, there were differences within family cultures and experiences. For the most part, though, there was a certain “sameness” in how my participants described their family culture. I also searched for consistencies across categories. For example, if participants were concerned about their parents’ reaction to their pre-marital relationships, I would expect to see parental concern surface in other categories, such as discussing their parenting styles.

CHAPTER 3:

MARRIAGE TALES

I began all the joint interviews by asking each couple how long they have been married followed by how they met. From these questions, I asked about the time leading up to the wedding as well as details about the wedding process. There were two reasons for beginning with these questions. First, it built a rapport and made everyone comfortable (myself included.) Couples seemed to enjoy reminiscing about how they met. While participants did discuss the wedding ceremony, how they met and the time leading up to the wedding were discussed much more enthusiastically and in much more detail than the actual ceremony. The other reason for starting with these questions was to ascertain the importance of Indian culture. Marriage is a manifestation of culture insofar as it reflects one's religious and social beliefs. Moreover, the fact that my second-generation participants had chosen to marry co-ethnics indicates a desire to maintain an ethnic identity. Maintaining an Indian identity, or "identity work," is not necessarily defined by constant engagement in rituals. However, people do connect with their heritage or "who they are" by marrying a co-ethnic and raising children within the ethnic community (Dhingra 2007).

Discussing marriage within the Indian American community inevitably includes "arranged marriages." The concept of arranged marriage is one of the most well known cultural markers of India. Every one of my participants reported that they have had non-Indians ask them about arranged marriage. Of the eighteen couples, seven reported that their parents arranged their marriage. One couple described their marriage as occurring through an introduction. That is, their families set up a meeting and the couple then made the decision about whether they

would marry each other. Nine couples met through friends, Indian events, or while at college. One couple reported that they met in a bar. Ten couples described their period before the engagement as “dating.” The dating period varied from as long as six years, (during college,) to as short as four weeks. Regardless of the manner in which they met or how marriage occurred, their narratives reveal the influence of both Indian and American culture. I found that their rich narratives, or marriage tales, underscored the integration of culture instead of the binary of “Indian” versus “American.” Participants discussed a desire to negotiate matrimony in such a way that they and their parents were happy. For example, the following excerpt illustrates how participants negotiated their wishes for matrimony as well as their parents’ wishes. I asked this mother and father how long after they began dating did they tell their parents about their relationship. Because this couple discussed their native state in India, I use the generic titles, “mother” and “father” to protect confidentiality.

- Mother: It was about four months.
- Father: Yeah. I think her concern was more that because we are – even though we’re both Gujarati –
- Mother: We’re different castes.
- Father: Different castes. So, her concern was my parents might have an issue with her and her family and all that. She’s like, let’s just make sure my [his] parents are OK before she goes and tells her parents because once her dad knows about it –
- Mother: It’s a done deal.
- Father: He might be unhappy about the whole situation because again, it’s out of different castes.
- Mother: But it was one of those [situations] where I knew that if I mentioned anything at that point, he’s was going to be, all right, this is it.
- Interviewer: But you were OK with that?

Mother: Yeah.

Father: Yeah. The way my parents – the way I was raised was you marry who you want. Again, if that person's Indian, great, and if that person's Gujarati, even better.

Mother: My dad had a wish list.

Neither of these participants explicitly discussed a preference for marrying a co-ethnic. They did, however, discuss a desire to negotiate dating and marriage in a way that would be respectful to their parents – an important characteristic of Indian marriages. Narratives, such as this one, revealed much about the salience of Indian culture for the second-generation adults.

This chapter focuses on the couples' narratives of how they met and the period leading up to the engagement and wedding ceremony. Throughout all the narratives, couples discussed parental involvement. Even for the couples who stated that they met their spouse "on their own," parents' expectations concerning their marriage were considered and negotiated. I organize my findings across a continuum of most parental involvement to least parental involvement. Yet another way to label this continuum is from conservative to a liberal approach to marriage. However, defining these latter terms is problematic because the definition is predicated on a particular social location. What is understood as "liberal" varies across Indian American community and mainstream American culture. For example, I could use labels such as, "traditionally arranged marriage" or "liberal love marriage." Rather than attempt to capture the meaning of these words for my participants, I focused on other indicators of culture. The most important of these indicators was parental involvement. Admittedly, I used arranged marriage as one end of the continuum and in essence, organized the matrimonial approach of each couple by its distance from the end point. Nonetheless, using parental involvement as a dimension of

marriage demonstrated much about the desire to maintain Indian culture in my participants' lives.

THE STARTING POINT: ARRANGED MARRIAGE

I begin this section with a brief overview of the cultural experience of arranged marriage. Mainstream America stereotypically views arranged marriage as a sexless (except for procreation) and loveless union forced upon two individuals. In this scenario, it is almost as though the two people marrying are victims of heavy parental control. More specifically, women are victims in the arranged marriage process. Women are perceived as forced into the marriage or abused by her new in-laws.

Due to these common misconceptions about arranged marriages, an overview is useful. Under the tradition of Hindu arranged marriages, dating is strongly discouraged or actually forbidden. Thus, mate selection is handled by the parents (Das Dasgupta 1996). Historically and ideally, Hindu arranged marriages follow a general protocol. Once a child reaches an appropriate age for marriage, commonly at the completion of all university studies, the parents will search for a suitable spouse. The search is usually confined to the family's community and caste. It is customary for one member of the immediate or extended family to be acquainted professionally or personally with a member of the prospective bride or groom's family. This serves as a reference point to ensure harmony and consistency with the family's values and traditions. In Hindu marriage, the union signifies a marriage of two families rather than solely a union between two people.

There are three universal criteria by which all females are evaluated. First is the economic standing of her family; second is her physical attractiveness, which includes lightness

of her skin; and third is her level of education. The ultimate decision of marriage most often lies with the male and his family. However, the more eligible or desirable the female, the more power she has to turn down the proposed arrangement. Conversely, the only critical factor influencing the male's eligibility is his education and earning potential.

Marriage customs vary by place and community. There is a shared history or philosophy that underlies the custom for all Hindu communities and that is that the form and function of Hindu arranged marriages be rooted in the religion. Because mate selection is considered a family decision, a love marriage is more of a selfish endeavor (Basu 2001). In the Indian family, the concept of "love" is more generational. That is, individuals have a love of family rather than the cultural ideal of Western societies where one's spouse is the primary recipient of "romantic love."

ARRANGED MARRIAGE WITH HIGH PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The first narratives convey an arranged marriage in the most "traditional" sense. On a continuum, this approach is on the far right end point. The parents of both participants were involved from first meeting to marriage. In general, the children communicate to their parents all reactions to the first meeting and their decision to accept or decline the arrangement. For the first meeting, family members (usually the parents,) accompany the prospective bride and groom. Couples are not allowed a so-called date or dating period; they are given approximately forty minutes to one hour to talk to each other alone. This conversation always occurs in a room off from the rest of the family members. Bindu's and Bimal's account illustrate this protocol.

Bimal: Well, basically my mom called me one day. She was in India and I was just coming home from [college] and she called me saying, you know I met a very nice girl here. Take the first flight over and I think you should

meet her, so that's what I did. I went to [city] and got my visa updated and in two days, got a flight and flew over. Met my mom in Delhi, so we stayed there for a couple of days and then we took a train to [native Indian state] and I think I was actually meeting you (wife) back in the hotel very briefly for about a half hour or so –

Interviewer: Alone or –

Bimal: No, with family.

Bindu: No, with family and then they left us in the room to talk for a few, like maybe 45 minutes. (laughter)
You know it's like you don't have much to say when you first meet, right? You meet some stranger and [he is supposed] to marry me, you have that [thought about] this person. I think you are just so nervous and you don't know what to say and I was so young, both of us [were]. He was 24 and I was all of 20, 19 and a half. And so at that age, you don't know what to expect. You end up talking about what schools and what education and what you were doing and you know. I didn't know what to expect basically.

Bimal: Well, see I didn't have a very strict [list], I didn't go in with the checklist. Basically I was looking for - I definitely wanted to marry someone with a bubbly, outgoing personality because I know that I'm not that type of person and I would want at least my married partner to be very outgoing which of course is [my wife]. And obviously, it has to be a person with a very good academic background and [I could] immediately tell she had one. [I wanted] a person who had some interest in Western cultural things such as, music, movies, etc. I know that because, – see, having grown up in the US, I did have a lot of exposure to an Indian background because my parents made sure of that but in many ways, I feel more American than Indian because like I don't have much interest in Indian movies or music and whatnot. Some. Not a whole lot but on the other hand, I don't find myself to be completely American either. It's like an in between. But, I was definitely looking for my future wife to have some interest [in western culture]. So, I thought because she [said she] listens to George Michael and clearly has some interest in Western music, culture, and whatnot. I thought, that's great.

Bindu: I had no clue. (laughter) [My mother] asked me so did you like him? I said you know, I don't know. Did you like him? It's like –

Interviewer: How can you form an opinion in ...

Bindu: I couldn't.

Interviewer: Well then what happened? Did you meet again or –

Bindu: No. After that meeting then the next morning his mom called us to ask what I thought and then she said the same, what he thought about me and getting married and all that. So but yes, we were both tired so then they came over in the evening to have a dinner now that it's all formal. So now they can come meet more.

Interviewer: Oh, OK. So you met again?

Bindu: Now that it [marriage] was committed basically. My parents and I said yes and his mom said yes so they came over and we had a small get together. All my relatives came over too.

Bimal: So if we were talking it was with a whole bunch of other people around.

Bindu: Yeah, not one to one but in general like all of us had something to say.

Interviewer: So and then what happened? So did the engagement take place before you left India?

Bindu: It wasn't an engagement. It was like a commitment kind of. His mom gave me a ring.

Bimal: Well, that is like, that's equivalent to engagement you'd say.

Bindu: Yeah. Commitment. And she [husband's mother] gave a ring to me.

I asked Bindu if she could have declined. That is, how much autonomy did she have in this process? Given her age, she may not have had too much say over the final decision. Her parents may have thought they “know best.”

Interviewer: Would you have had veto power, if you had met him and just didn't click for you? Could you have told your parents that?

Bindu: But how will you tell that? You have to base your veto on something, right? So, the first thing you know is if you feel there is something wrong. You can tell that much, right? But other than the interest or how this person is... – whether he's sociable or has some depression problem, those things you can never tell in your 40 minutes in talking, right? You can never tell and you cannot just go on and on and go date, you cannot do that. Forty minutes is your initial, [for] that “feeling.” That's it. If this person is not

good looking or purely there is something that is missing or something is wrong, those are the only things that you can really base your decision on.

Marriage as approached in a very pragmatic way. Describing your reaction to your spouse in terms of a “spark” or “feeling” are Western constructs that are simply not suitable for determining whether two families are compatible for lifelong marriage. In India, women can veto a union or reject a potential marriage partner, however they have to base their decision on something more meaningful than a lack of “spark” or “feeling.” In other words, a woman cannot tell her parents that she simply did not “like him.” This meeting has been prescreened and approved by family members. Thus, the parents believe it is a good match and parents “know best.”

While Bindu explained that she went into the meeting without any expectations, Bimal claimed that he had a list, albeit short. His list was an attempt to determine compatibility on a more Western measure. The Indian view is that “love comes later,” meaning the two people grow in love as they live together and learn about each other. Bimal entered this initial meeting with questions that really could not be understood in such a brief encounter. George Michael was his yardstick of Bindu’s appreciation of Western culture. As he described himself, he is not absolutely “Indian” or “American.” Not surprisingly, he mentally processed this experience in India, mediated somewhat though his socialization to Western culture.

In the next excerpt, Ramesh, a second-generation Indian American, traveled to India to meet his wife, Reena. He explicitly described that something “felt right” for him in this brief meeting.

Ramesh: I mean me personally, I felt something and so it felt like it was right, you know?

Interviewer: OK, and I guess you thought the same or you didn’t know?

Reena: I was not exactly thinking [that in] my head. I felt like that I think, after he said he wants to marry, I don't think it before that.

So you know, like yeah, I had a 50/50 way to think that OK, if it happens then I'll put more thoughts on it but before that - [no].

Reena is more pragmatic about the meeting than Ramesh. He integrated the cultures by accepting an arranged marriage based on Western romantic notions of love and marriage. It was as if Ramesh was on a first date. Stating, "it felt right," connotes two different meanings. The speaker could mean that though there was no "earth moving" emotional event this person is a good fit. On the other hand, the speaker could have meant that the other person was exactly "right," just the person he had dreamt would complete this life (Swindler 2001: 120). In either scenario, the sentiment is culturally bound. Our social location mediates how we make sense of mate selection. Reena, conversely, cannot really be as expressive to her parents as Ramesh. First-generation Indian women tend not to express themselves in such romantic or emotional terms. This lack of expressiveness may be due to the fact that a woman's reputation or standing in the community is more vulnerable than the man's. Women, or specifically daughters, carry the reputation of their birth families (Kurien 2004). Consequently, women may feel that they need to be the reactors, rather than appear to be aggressively pursuing a mate. Emotional or expressive language may suggest that she has made a decision and considers herself committed to the prospective groom. If he declines the arrangement, then, it could reflect negatively on the woman. Moreover, parents believe daughters and sons should not be making such an important decision without their involvement.

In the next excerpt, Anish, a second-generation Indian American, also approaches the initial meeting as though it is a first date. In the process of discussing how their marriage was arranged, Amira and Anish provide more nuances to the arranged marriage process. What is also

noteworthy about this excerpt is that Amira describes how she did reject a potential marital partner.

Anish: It's an arranged marriage, so we –

Amira: His uncle knows my dad. My dad is an engineer, and his uncle also worked in the same office, in the same department. And, you know how it is. Through networking, they're like oh, my girl is marriageable age. And they just talk. Somebody said, oh, he knows somebody who's family's in US, and they're looking for a girl in India. So, that's how it all started. Then, so, my dad approached them, and then he found out that his dad was coming over to India. And by this time, he knows nothing about it I guess. So, his dad came over to my place, and he met with me. He came over for dinner. And then I think after that, I think the pictures were sent here. And he must have looked good.

Interviewer: Oh. So you saw pictures of each other before you met.

Amira: Yeah. And then he came there to India, and he met me there. And we met, what, for an hour?

Anish: Basically chatting about similar interests, just to figure out –

Amira: And it was totally opposite. Whatever I liked, he didn't like. He's like, "do you like sports?" I'm like, "hmm, okay, but not that much." And then he says, "Do you play tennis?" And I'm like, do you think I have the muscles to play tennis? Think I can hit the ball?" So, he was like, "oh my god. He's like what type of sports do you play?" I'm like, oh – in India we play all these things at home. I don't know what you call it, ...hopscotch -weird games. In the neighborhood I'll play with the kids. So, he's like, "oh my god, that's called sports?" Then, after we were done and then I came home. My parents were asking, "so what did he ask?" I'm like, "this is what he asked and this is what I told him. " They're like, "oh my god." But, I was just honest.

Interviewer: So what did you think?

Anish: It's fine. The only thing I think that was not matching or whatever was just sports. That's not such a major thing. But I liked it, in the sense that she spoke fairly good English, and responses were good, and she was pretty. And of course from the guy's side, we meet a lot of different girls. You probably know about that, in the arranged marriage. It's a mutual type of understanding that they both have to agree, it's just not that either of our parents is going to force us to get married like –

Amira: It wasn't like that.

Anish: In the old days, the parents agreed, it really doesn't matter what the kids say.

Amira: And my parents were always supportive. Like I saw one guy – of course that was arranged too, and I didn't like him at all. It wasn't that I didn't like him look-wise, but his thoughts and his whatever – the way he thought about religion and all that. So I told my parents there's no way I can. And they said that – they're trying to explain that you're still young, he can change his mind.

Interviewer: Did your parents introduce you to women here in the states as well? Or just –

Anish: No. No. Generally speaking, guys – at least when they go from here, they don't want to get married the first time - maybe the second time. And it also depends on the age. So if you were let's say 23, chances are you're not going to get married. Twenty-six to 30, chances are you're probably going to get married. Because you're thinking about it over and over, at least you're being directed. You should settle down and this and that and whatever.

Interviewer: So what happened? So OK, you met for an hour, then what happened?

Amira: Oh, and then it was like I don't know, his parents must have asked him, my parents asked me, so do you like him? I'm like, "yeah, I'm fine with it." Because it was a big decision that I'll have to move to US. And I was OK with that, and then they're waiting for a response from his parents. Because then they said that they would let us know by the end of the day. So my dad's like OK – he was prepared – whatever happens, happens. And then I think that day or next day, whatever it was, they told us that they're OK with everything.

Interviewer: So then what happens?

Amira: Oh, and then – so that was on the 13th. I met him on the 13th, and then I think on the 14th or something his parents said we're OK. So then my parents went there [where his parents were staying] and all, because there was no time for engagement – he was coming back in two weeks (to the United States). So, on the 19th we had to get married. So [we got married] in six days, then my dad had to arrange everything.

Anish: Which is shocking for me, too.

Amira: Yeah. (laughter) They had to get a hotel, and we had 1500 people in our wedding.

I make two points about this excerpt. First, Amira provided an example where a rejection was based on something more than “feeling” or appearance. While her parents honored her decision, they nonetheless communicate their wisdom in this situation. That is, the man is young; his views will change as he matures. Secondly, Anish demonstrated how he did mediate the experience through a Western lens insofar as he made the contrast between the manner in which his marriage was arranged as compared to the past or “the old days.” Thus, his arrangement was more progressive. In this way, Anish negotiated the matrimonial process in line with his preferences, but he was also respectful of his parents’ wishes. Unlike the “old” way, he had autonomy in the matrimonial process.

The most common arrangement is for the man to travel to India to find a bride. Most marriages in India, as well as the United States, occur within the same social class. In cases of hypergamy, it is usually the woman marrying a man in a higher social class. Women are moving up in social class when they marry a second-generation Indian American man. The next excerpt with Vineeta and Vijay illustrated this point.

Vineeta: For him, it’s a whole new thing. He didn’t come in with the mind of getting married to somebody he’s only going to see for three, four days. Not even all day, you know?

Vijay: But I guess – not guess, I know something clicked for me anyway and so we went to her house and we were upstairs and I said, “are you sure?” And I did say, “Your parents aren’t forcing you to do this, are they?” And she of course said no and then later she said well, maybe. No. And then I said no.

Vineeta: Slightly maybe.

Vijay: Her dad –

Vineeta: Because my dad has three girls and I'm the oldest.

He always had this thing in his mind where he always wanted us to come here to United States. I don't know why. He just thought it was such a better life there because he spent a lot of money. In India, not a lot of parents spend a lot of money for their daughter's education. If you have a son, they spend the money. But if you have a daughter, not so much.

[You are going to be with somebody else] so, why would you benefit somebody else when you were supposed to be at home, working and cooking? All you need to do is learn to read and write. You don't need to be very well educated but, my dad never believed in that because he had three daughters. Since we all were born, my grandmother would cry and say, "oh my God, my father doesn't have anybody to inherit what he has and who's going to take care of him."

Vijay: Yeah, in '94 we were court registered married.

Interviewer: Did you do a commitment ceremony there or did you come back to the States?

Vijay: Yes. No, there. There we did basically a small wedding ceremony.

Vineeta: After a few days. Very little [event].

Vijay: It was very small and so that when you had to file paperwork to bring someone here, you need to prove that you're not just doing a scam type of thing. You're actually getting married.

Vineeta: You have to show pictures.

Vijay: You kind of have to show at least you made an effort and all that. Now even though we were committed to doing the full ceremony the following year because my father wasn't there and then most – and I was the first of the American born or the American raised to get married in my father's family.

Interviewer: How long did it take for you to come here?

Vineeta: A year.

Interviewer: Oh. That must have been frustrating. Was that frustrating?

Vijay: It was a little.

Vineeta: Actually it was OK because we got to know each other.

Interviewer: Oh, you talked on the phone?

Vineeta: He called me every week.

Vijay: Yeah.

Interviewer: You called every week?

Vijay: Oh, yeah.

Vineeta: There was a time, like all week even as now, every time we talk about it, oh, there was a time where, if he would be watching the games, he would just get up and say, “OK, got to call my wife.” And he would just leave. He would call me regularly.

Again, Vijay expressed some inexplicable feeling at the first meeting. But, before accepting the arrangement he needed to ensure that Vineeta was not forced into this union. Vijay’s question had two interwoven objectives. From a humanitarian perspective, he certainly did not want to be involved with forcing someone into marriage. Also, it is emasculating in a sense to have your prospective wife “forced” into marriage with you. Vineeta explained why she received pressure from her father to accept an Indian American spouse, but the couple did not discuss how they worked through this issue.

India is a patrilocal society, meaning that sons remain with their birth families after marriage, but daughters leave their birth families and join their husband’s families. Typically, families do not invest so much in daughters because upon marriage, a daughter becomes part of her husband’s family. Hence, the family may resent spending resources on someone who will eventually be part of another family. However, families do invest in daughter’s education when parents intend to arrange a marriage a marriage to an Indian American. Educational attainment

elevates a women's eligibility or makes her a more attractive mate. Vineeta's father made the educational investment in her because she was being groomed for marriage to an American.

Since 1965, marriage has long served as an impetus for migration. Primarily, men travel to India to "find a bride." In my study, of those who reported that their marriage was arranged, four of the second-generation men traveled to India for brides as compared to only two women. Second-generation women are more likely to be concerned that men in India hold much stronger patriarchal views than second-generation Indian American men. For the women, a first-generation Indian American who migrated for education or employment is viewed as a more desirable mate than a man who has spent his entire life in India. First-generation parents are eager to have their second-generation American sons travel to India to find a bride. Women raised in India are thought to be less Westernized and, consequently it is presumed that they will not resent fulfilling family traditions. As a strongly gendered experience, migration through marriage reinforces patriarchy in the Indian American family (Palriwala and Uberoi 2008).

For families in India, migration through marriage is really about social mobility. Typically, the brides' parents view migration as an opportunity for better economic standing (Palriwala and Uberoi 2008: 31). Globally, "embedded notions of 'hypergamy,'" dictate the flow and destination of migration. The direction of marriage migration tends to parallel the direction of labor migration. Because marriage is a union of two families, the daughter's migration to the United States opens the migration door for other family members. Once settled in the United States, other siblings and cousins of the bride may migrate as well.

While men are more likely to travel to India to find a mate, women travel to India also. In the next excerpt, Trisha, second-generation woman, traveled to India to find her husband.

- Trisha: I wasn't an easy person to please, so I kept saying no to everybody. And at the end, in fact, when we were ready to come back, I overheard my parents' conversation. I was pretty adamant that I didn't want to get married to a doctor, so most of the boys that my mother introduced me to were doctors. I overheard their conversation – and I wanted somebody tall, that was my thing – so, my dad was like, I can't believe that there's no tall, non-doctor boy in [native state] that we can get for her. So, my mom's like, there is one guy, but he's [occupation]. He can't get married right now, so there's no point in going. And my dad was like, well, let me just meet them. Let's see what happens. So, my dad went and met his parents, and they got along very well. This is right after New Year's, so he had just –
- Taresh: Second of January.
- Trisha: Taresh happened to be [on break from his training] to come home for the holidays. So, my father-in-law was like, "well, he's here if you want to meet him. I don't know about marriage, but you're welcome to meet him." So, my dad was like, "there's no harm in meeting." So, he came back and he told me that there's such and such a guy. You need to meet him. So, we went and we met and basically, "It was nice meeting you," "Nice meeting you." We didn't openly say it, but he was like, "I'm in [in training], so it's hard for me to go to America." And I said, "well, I'm in college. It's hard for me to stay in India," and we kind of ended matters there.
- Interviewer: So, this was alone. Did your families come together and then they –
- Trisha: Well, Taresh came with his brother, and I was there with everybody. Coming alone wasn't an option.
- Interviewer: But did they let you go off to a room and talk?
- Trisha: We met in a hotel, and we met with everybody, and then they went into the lobby and left us alone for about a half an hour or so, and that's when we talked. We got to talk about [different topics]. And things ended there, and my dad was like, "did you like him?" And I said, "he seemed nice, but I'm not going to live in India and he doesn't want to go to America, so there's no point in pursuing this." And my dad paused for a second and he was like, "I like him." And up until that point, my dad never interfered in my decision. If I said no, it was no. He never, never said, he never even asked me why. So, this is the first time that he – all he said was "I like him." And I was like, there has got to be something in him if my dad likes. So, he, I guess, met with Taresh's father again and – or you? He met with you and you had said that you want to meet me again or something?

- Taresh: I would ask, so what did they say? Basically, the protocol is that you meet, you talk to each other. If you like it, say your consent or if you don't like it, say whatever you have to say to your parents and they will convey to the other party. What do you say? By this time, for some reason, I said before I say yes or no, I would like to meet her one more time. So, we met again on 5th of January.
- Trisha: This time they left us alone from the get go. Well, they were still outside in the lobby, but we were allowed to be alone in the restaurant.
- Taresh: So, we met again and this time we talked about a little bit more seriousness. Said OK, it's a possibility that we can get married. We talked for about 45 minutes, an hour?
- Trisha: No. We over went our limit. We were given a 40 minute limit and we talked for an hour. My family was squirming. (laughter)
- Taresh: So, we met and talked. Then I came back home. I was asked the same question. I said I think we can get married.
- Interviewer: But did you two say it to each other in the restaurant?
- Taresh: We just never said no, but we didn't ask directly either. That was not the protocol, to communicate with each other. The protocol was to go through the parents.
- Trisha: Because everything was initiated by the parents, so everything went through the parents.
- Taresh: In our conversation it was kind of clear that yes, we agreed.
- Trisha: That's the intention, yes.
- Taresh: That intention, but that question was never put or conveyed in a direct way.
- Trisha: And I think the way it works is he went home and obviously, his family asked and my family asked. And it's usually, at least in [native state] – I don't know about the rest of India – but the girl's father is usually the one that follows up. So, when my dad called, my father-in-law had said, why don't we meet?
- Taresh: He said OK. My dad asked [me], what do you say? I said OK. Then her dad called my dad, and I say yes.

From this narrative, it did seem as though Trisha had far more negotiation room than is typical for women. However, as second-generation, her parents may have thought that her “being difficult” was unavoidable. Trisha was raised in the United States; consequently, her parents would have to make accommodations to the arranged marriage process. The objective was to ensure their second-generation daughter marries within culture. Divorce is far more acceptable in the United States than in India. The fact that the man’s family was using marriage for migration may have also provided Trisha with more negotiation room. Nonetheless, Trisha was able to make demands, such as the man’s appearance and his occupation, that are usually requests that are reserved for the man. Quite simply, if Trisha was going to agree to an arranged marriage, she had certain requirements. During the interview, she did not explain why she was willing to look for a husband in India. The reason may be have to do with the size of the Indian community in her family’s geographic area at that point in time. Her parents may have thought that if they were going to search across the United States for a husband, then they might as well search in India. This narrative also illustrated parental involvement. From Trisha’s account, the strongest determinant that Taresh would be “the one,” was her father’s approval. Apparently, he had never shared his thoughts concerning any previous introductions. Thus, his simple, “I like him,” resonated with Trisha.

Only one couple where both were second-generation described their marriage as arranged by their parents. Sheela and Satish described how they met. In their individual interviews, both said that their matrimonial process happened as they had envisioned.

Sheela: We met – actually, it was through a friend of my parents. He knew my parents because he’d lived in the same area as my parents did. He would come over to my parents’ house quite often. I knew him from the time maybe that I was in junior high. After some time, he moved and lost

contact with my parents, and where he ended up moving to was where Satish's parents are at. And, once he established contact with my parents, several years had passed. I had gone through undergrad, graduated, and was working, close to where my parents live. And just in conversation with finding out about how the children were doing, it came up, you know, Sheela is already graduated, this and that. And my parents, at that time – for me, they were starting to think about [marriage for me], and so was I to some extent. You know, they wanted to follow the traditional Indian arranged married but, they were also, – we had kind of this implied understanding between us that I would – it would be my decision.

I mean, they would bring me prospects and whatnot. And so when this individual contacted my father again to establish contact and – and just through conversations, he happened to mention that he was down in where Satish's father was, and he had – correct me if I'm wrong, had he been over to your parents' house?

Satish: Yes. Yeah. He'd been over to my parents' place, and I'd say he'd known my father for a couple of years before.

Sheela: So, once it came out that, you know, Sheela's at this point in her life, he sort of said, "Well, you know, I know this family down in [city], and they're looking for their older son. " So that pretty much initiated everything. Subsequent to that establishment [of first meeting], both our fathers got in touch with each other, and, you know, we got in touch, and I guess as they say, the rest is [history].

Satish: Yeah. It was a very early flight (for the initial meeting.) I was expecting to see Sheela, her mother, and her father there. But instead I just see this Indian man there. So I'm like, you know, that's her father. So, my first interaction was with him alone.

And he's driving, and later I find out he's actually a pretty fast driver. But he drives from [the airport] to Sheela's, place, which is about 50 miles. He's of course doing the standard – which I expected, and which was good. [He asked] the standard questions of, you know, what's your ambition, what are your goals?

I was a little bit taken aback that I had this long drive with just, you know, Sheela's father. I've not contacted him at all. My father had spoken to him, but I had never spoken with him before. But, I took it in stride. I figured, you know, any questions he would ask, it would also give me a sense of what's important to him and what is he asking about. So it was – it was good for me as well.

Sheela: Actually I was expecting my father to wake me up to go with him because we had made – I thought we had agreed. But, he just let me sleep. Okay.

No problem. No problem. And no, I wasn't expecting to be [nervous] – I mean, we had talked already, so I [felt] little bit more comfortable seeing each other face to face. You know, it's so funny because I opened the door and here I am standing in the doorway, and my father's standing directly in between us. So we both had to go like this – we both had to lean to one side and said hello to each other. And, you (husband) had arrived just in time for lunch so we had lunch prepared already.

Satish: Actually, when we first had lunch, it was your mother, your father, you and I. So, the four of us probably had more of an hour maybe?

Sheela: Yeah. And then they were like, "Okay, Sheela, take him around (the city)." Because that was our chance to talk.

Satish: So I think we'd probably made the decision to get married mid-March. And we'd met the first time face to face in January so, within eight weeks – yeah, six to eight weeks –

Sheela: Six to eight weeks, yeah.

Satish: We decided we wanted to get married. When we tell our Caucasian friends, they're just blown away with the fact. The other Indian couples we know – there's some Indian couples that even had shorter [pre-marital periods]. We've got friends that literally, they'd go to India, at the end of December, and by January 1, they're engaged.

Sheela: They're married, yeah, or engaged.

Satish: Yeah. So you get, you know, two weeks to ten days. But for us, you know, it was six to eight weeks.

Throughout their narrative, Sheela and Satish did not discuss emotions. There was no mention of a "spark" or some other inexplicable emotion that occurred when they met. However, Sheela and Satish, as well as all the other couples, remember specific dates, activities, and even meals that were shared. They remember the moment that they first met and how long they were allowed to speak at this first meeting. Perhaps this lack of expressive emotion was another indication of culture. The Western romantic ideal involves expressing attraction or affection for a loved one. Collectivist cultures do not advocate such individualistic expressions. Nonetheless, these meeting must hold some sentimental value because they were retold in such detail.

In their joint interview as well as their individual interviews, Sheela and Satish explicitly expressed a desire to maintain Indian culture in their lives. They both stressed the importance of Indian culture in raising children. As mentioned, raising children within the Indian American community is the most important way to maintain a sense of Indian identity. Thus, marriage to a non-Indian negates one's "Indianness." What is understood as "culture," is comprised of symbolic chunks that are not realized individually, but are related to a routine of behaviors (i.e. children, food, clothing, religion.) These cultural patterns are played out in the social space as ethnic identity is "inherently" social (Swindler 2001). One cannot practice being Indian alone. The notion of an ethnic identity is predicated on cultural behaviors that are observable by others.

AN ARRANGED INTRODUCTION

Only one couple classified their marriage as more of an introduction than arranged event. This means that the couple agrees to the introduction arranged by the parents, but believe the decision if and when to marry is directly shared between them. On the continuum of parental involvement, agreeing to an introduction is to the left of a complete arranged marriage and halfway to the center of the continuum. The only conclusive difference between this narrative and Sheela and Satish's narrative, is that Heera and Hitesh explained that they arranged to see each other outside formal meetings set up by Heera's parents. Sheela and Satish could have scheduled meetings on their own, but Sheela's parents were against any face-to-face interaction that they did not set up and monitor. The couple respected their wishes. Heera and Hitesh's account begins similar to the other couples, until they actually meet. Their first meeting was more like a first date, in that family members were not present. After the first meeting, Heera and Hitesh take over the marriage process.

Heera: Well, my parents had asked like the entire world if they knew anybody from the general [area]. So, they basically had put ads out in the Indian papers and his [husband] friend happened to see an ad for me for himself. But, then was like [to husband], you know, “they’re saying that it’s from this particular caste or whatever and you’re that one so why don’t you look into it?” So he told his mom and then it turned out that one of my distant cousins and his brother-in-law or whatever were working in the same office too. Then it was more comforting because it wasn’t like a stranger. They set up a meeting, but I didn’t meet him first. I met his family. There happened to be a wedding. Interestingly, he was flying out of India the day I was flying into India for the wedding. So, if you think in terms of fate, you’d think we’d never meet because it’s like I’m at one end of the airport and he’s at another end. Same day. We were flying two different directions.

So when I was there, we met his family and they showed me his picture and he looked nice so I was like, “okay.” I’d met a lot of losers while I was there too. I was just more to appease them [parents] that I was meeting these people, but I knew right off that I wouldn’t – especially if they wanted me to meet some guy from [native Indian state] - especially. Oh, you know, it would be the same and it would be quite the opposite [match for me], but just to like satisfy them [parents] that I met them. I would meet these people and every single one of them wanted to come here. So then basically I met his family, he was meeting my dad the same day coincidental here [U.S]. Then we met at my parents’ place and then from that point on...

So then we came back here, I met him, and I liked him. It wasn’t love at first sight but, I liked him and he was in [city] and I was in [nearby city]. We basically from this point on dated on our own and my dad probably knows but doesn’t like to be aware of that. My mom knew that we were meeting all the time and I’d been to his place. He got sick once, and when I went over there, she was like, “oh, bring him this and bring him that,” because she was the mom. My dad came one day. We were going to his place and I had to pretend like I’d never been there. Well, the directions say to make a right on this street. (laughter) I’m sure he must have known. I mean we met many times but for my dad’s eyes and ears or whatever- no. We only met like those particular times and he must have known because within a month, not even, we knew we wanted to get married. And I had always built them up to thinking that I’m going to take years to decide who I’m going to marry so they thought I’d met this guy, it’s going to be months. Here we are a month later saying we want to get married and they’re like when? And we’re like as soon as possible. Now my dad flipped out because he hadn’t met – it’s very important to meet the family. He hadn’t met anybody on his side.

But, it went quickly. It wasn't exactly arranged. I consider it more like it was a set up and that's as far as I wanted it to be that way. I was actually very glad we didn't meet in India because when you meet in India, they put so much pressure to decide within days. That's absurd. And for me, I grew up here and I know that you can be in love one day and out of love another. So I wasn't for the whole thing where you meet and of course everyone's on their best behavior. Nobody shows their true colors and how do you know what someone's going to really be like when you get married to them? So that's the way I thought, but then obviously here I am like weeks later, saying I want to get married to him. So you know, he basically changed that thinking of mine, but he was different too. He didn't play games like most of the guys here do.

Our first date was in New York, and my friend said, "Why don't you make it a dinner and a movie because then if you don't like the guy..." He sat there with like a list of questions and I was just taken aback because I'm thinking, "what is this? An interview?"

Interviewer: Did he pull out a piece of paper and unfold it?

Heera: He did. And I have the piece of paper and it's in a scrapbook. I'm going to give it to my grandchildren and be, "look at your crazy grandfather." I really would have like bolted out the door but he was asking me all these crazy things and very frank, very upfront. I kind of I thought we were just going to have casual conversation and see a movie. You know what I mean?

Interviewer: What were the questions about? Were they about ...

Heera: It was just like it was things about him and then there were questions about me and then he was just taking note of the responses to all these questions and –

Interviewer: You wrote down what she said? (Husband does not respond.)

Heera: I don't think he wrote them down. He didn't have to. But he basically was like, "it's very important; family is very important to me," and what else? He was like, "I may want to go back to India." At the time, I was kind of open. Now, no, but for many reasons. At the time, I was like what's important is that the two people are together, whether they live here or there is really not the issue. You never know where life takes you. So, that's the response I gave him and he seemed to like that and but so whatever question he asked, I basically got a stamp of approval with the answers I gave him. I think a lot of the question was, are you being forced to meet me type of thing also and I was like, "no, I wouldn't do that."

I wouldn't be sitting here with you." Certainly not on a one on one date. He was different from most of the Indian guys I had met because he was more liberal and open than the ones that definitely grew up in India. I actually had only met the guys from [native state] in India so that skewed [my view] already. And then the ones I met here, like they were OK. Nothing that – you know, one guy, his parents forced him to meet people. He actually had a girlfriend. So it was kind of like lame. It's like you know, you either tell them that you have a girlfriend and you're not interested. Don't waste my time. You know what I mean? But he was the only like normal type one here. So he's sitting there quietly but ...

Hitesh: No, I'm listening.

Heera: You know, he didn't meet any other people so he didn't have all these interesting adventures with all these strange people.

Hitesh: I think it's very difficult between the two cultures. We are from the same culture, but living in India and here is so different. So those questions that I asked, they had a lot of practical, you can say, it's not "lovey dovey." That's not the way to court.

This narrative illustrated the transition from the arranged process to more of an assisted meeting. While Heera did describe the first meeting as a "date," they nonetheless discussed marriage. In other words, they both knew the reason for meeting was to see if they wanted to marry each other. This first date was not the start of recreational dating. However, in western dating protocol, discussing marriage on the first date may not be appropriate, though the couple might be wondering if this person is "the one." The importance of autonomy was highlighted with this narrative as well as the preceding narrative. Despite marrying within eight weeks or less, both couples feel that they had an extended courting period. Even though Heera acknowledged that four weeks to make a decision was quite short, overall she did not acknowledge that her marriage process was much more in the Indian tradition than Western "dating."

As with Trisha, Heera had space to negotiate her marriage. Clearly, she was not coerced into marrying Hitesh. Across all the women in my study, the second-generation women appeared to have more negotiating room than their first-generation counterparts had in India. To ensure that they marry a co-ethnic, first-generation parents have to allow their daughters' to have more input into the process. Moreover, the first-generation parents, like their second-generation children, have been socialized to American culture- which includes more egalitarian gendered patterns than as compared to India.

As with other couples, Heera and Hitesh touched on what they discussed at that first meeting, but most did not reveal many specifics- even when I directly asked them. When the content was discussed, it was about sports or music. I could not help but wonder what questions they had for each other. Either the couples did not want to share the details about their discussion, the content was insignificant, or maybe they have forgotten. Considering the seriousness of the marital decision, I would assume that there were serious questions posed. Through my Western gaze, I wonder if they asked each other questions concerning sexual activity or children. That is, I assume the unspoken is tantalizing (Foucault 1978). Then again, as Bindu, from the first narrative explained, the two people can be rather young when their parents start to arrange their marriage. Lacking any experience with relationships or dating, for that matter, how would you know what to ask beyond basic compatibility questions? Additionally, the two people have never met, so they may not feel comfortable asking any questions beyond what most described as “general conversation.”

MEETING THROUGH INDIAN EVENTS

The narratives in this category describe meetings that took place in specific Indian functions or groups. Some participants attended clubs or parties in hopes of meeting a co-ethnic who would ultimately be their mate. Regardless of whether the intent was overtly stated, my participants were aware that attending community events could lead to meeting their spouse. In this scenario, the participants are finding their spouse on their own. For this reason, this kind of matrimonial approach is more or less the center point on the continuum of parental involvement. Parents had not performed any background checks with other families. However, once the couple began dating, they did share their relationship with their families and, consequently, their matrimonial intent with their parents. Parents monitor the relationship once it is established. At that point, parents' objective is to push for the couple to marry. In the first narrative, Leah and Lokesh described how they met through their parents' Indian community.

- Lokesh: We met at a Christmas Eve party in [year] at an Indian family's house who was part of our social community. And she was there. I guess she had just entered the community – the local community, and I had been part of it for maybe eight, nine years.
- Leah: This was in (home state). And what's interesting about it was that it was a party given on behalf of all those families who were [corporation] employees at the time.
- Lokesh: I call it the corporate ethnic subgroup. Because we [were part of a company as well as Indian]. And all the friends in that community – we all were kids that are roughly the same age growing up.
- Leah: Anyhow, when we moved to a different community. When we moved to a different city, you fall into an Indian – your parents fall into an Indian crowd. And that's what happened with my parents, is they fell in with an Indian circle that was strictly of [corporation] employees. I grew up in a very pan-Indian community or small Indian community. Basically, you were friends because you were Indian.

But this was different because it was a circle based around where the husbands work – not a single wife worked at [corporation].

So, I was new. What had happened is, this was in [year], so there was still – there were a lot of second generation kids who were single and in their early 20s and not even in their 20s and who would come because their parents would drag them to these parties. And Christmas Eve is fairly big party.

Lokesh: Because my parents were in India and I was the only child, so the Auntie (family friend hosting the party) said, I know your parents are in India, just come – I made chicken curry.

Interviewer: And so what? Were there sparks flying when you saw each other? (laughter).

Leah: Kind of, but we didn't really speak to each other.

Lokesh: I saw her, and I was like, I don't want to deal with girls right now.

Leah: Yeah, that's exactly what I felt, too – (laughter) –

Lokesh: I just can't – I mean, I know you're cute and all, but –

Leah: That's exactly how I felt. It was my last semester of college and I was sort of going through this empowered stay-away-from-boys kind of thing and just another Indian guy who wasn't going to talk. And all the pre-med people there. It seemed like another one of those situations that it might seem interesting, but I wanted to avoid.

Lokesh: No, I wouldn't have [been like those guys].

Leah: No, but I'm saying that whole vibe, right? But we had some mutual friends, and so it happened that even though we didn't speak that evening, I got invited to a small gathering that he was having at his house for New Year's. And I didn't get invited directly, I got invited through a friend of ours who was invited and he invited my brother and to go. And it ended up being just three or four people at your house.

Interviewer: So you wanted to invite her or –

Lokesh: Well, she was coming –

Interviewer: Oh, OK – you invited your friend and that friend just said you're welcome to come.

Lokesh: Yeah, and I told him, I said, you just invite whoever, you know.

- Leah: So we went. That's when we got to speak a little bit, but it wasn't anything, again. We were both so young. But what happened was, a few months later, we were – both of us were about to go in different directions. I was about to go to graduate school and he was about to go to New York to start working for one of his first jobs. We met at a wedding reception for another Indian of that generation – second generation kid was marrying.
- Lokesh: So a few months after our initial meeting.
- Leah: Yeah. And you know, again, our parents were all friends, so I went to the wedding. It was during my spring break. I went and sat at the same table that he did. And I knew that I wanted to get to know him better and we started really, really talking and we connected over talking about graduate school because he was interested in going for computer science and I knew that I was going to go somewhere if I got accepted – for [major]. So we started talking, and I just felt this kind of overwhelming feeling I don't know what, that I would do something. So I went home back to my house and shared it (meeting) with my best friends in college. And I had two months left of college, and I basically wrote him a letter, which was back in [year] when people actually still wrote letters. And so I wrote him a letter that was just a letter.
- Lokesh: It was more than a letter.
- Leah: I mean, it wasn't a love letter, definitely –
- Lokesh: It wasn't really a love letter.
- Leah: He wrote back a couple weeks later. By that point, I'd discovered where I was going to school and he had already accepted the job in New York. So things had just reached this sort of intensity as far as communicating. We communicated with letters every month or every month-and-a-half, so about four or five letters from that time. [We starting to send] e-mails, by which point, we were in [her city] and [his city] e-mailing and talking on the phone pretty intensely. And we had our first date on August 30th.
- Lokesh: Princess Diana death date.
- Leah: Yeah, August 30th or September 1st, I forget which of those dates.
- Lokesh: I think it was, like, August 30th or the 29th Right? We were driving back and we heard the news.

Leah: My mother was very nervous about the whole thing – about me seeing this boy, because I had just gone to school and then I had driven down the weekend after I had been dropped off at school to have my first date with this boy who was coming back to visit his parents.

My parents were like this is my first boyfriend and they knew what was happening that I would drive all the way back to see this boy. They knew his parents, but they weren't close with his parents.

Interviewer: So did you tell your parents that you had written him letters?

Leah: Yeah, well no–

Lokesh: No. You had not.

Leah: I don't think so. I think what happened was I didn't tell them I'd written him letters, but it came out that we were communicating. I think what happened is one of the letters arrived when I was out of town.

Lokesh: So her dad –

Leah: My dad –

Lokesh: Stopped by my dad's desk at the office and goes, do you know your son came and picked up my daughter last night? My dad was like, "oh, no. "

Leah: So my dad was pretty light-hearted about it, but I think it was that we weren't to date that seriously. They knew that we were communicating, but they didn't think it was anything serious. And to their credit, my parents were very even-tempered about the whole thing because they assumed that it was just that we were kind of casually getting to know each other, even when we were talking on the phone a lot, and then after he proposed five months later, then they were like...

We didn't get married till May [year] and this was August of [year]. But we got engaged in the sense that we knew we were going to marry each other by January [year].

Lokesh: Yes.

Leah: But what happened is, he proposed to me and I accepted – I was what? – just turned 22. So my parents were – again, because he was my first serious boyfriend, they were like, "you are not engaged yet. You need to get engaged." This was the first conversation that we had ever had in our family about the difference between cultures. I always grew up understanding what leads to an engagement versus the Indian conception

of being engaged, which is, you have a party, you have a formal engagement where you –

Lokesh: You perform a ceremony.

Leah: Perform a ceremony, which I had never heard about before. It was very interesting that as much Indian culture that I had, my parents never said to me, look, someday at some point, he's going to propose to you, but you're not engaged when you're engaged.

Interviewer: That's just the day that you decided to get married.

Leah: Right. They would not tell anybody. I mean, I was calling my college friends and I was like, "I'm getting married. I'm engaged." But, my parents wouldn't tell anybody until it got close to a feuding –

Interviewer: Did you have that ceremony – the engagement?

Leah: We did.

Lokesh: Yeah.

Leah: And so it was the following summer, so one year, almost exactly, from the date we had our first date.

Lokesh: One year after Diana –

Leah: We were formally engaged.

Lokesh: And then another year –

Leah: And then another nine months later [we got married].

The "engagement" is similar to, but different from the Western notion of "getting engaged." First, in either context, "engagement" signifies that the couple is committed to each other and bound for matrimony. However, within the Indian American community, the engagement differs from the Western cultural experience primarily in that parents are informed of the couples' intent to marry instead of the couple stating intent to each other. From the tradition of arranged marriage, accepting or declining the match is handled between parents.

Again, because marriage is a union of two families, couple does not decide on their own that they want to marry. Moreover, the man does not choose a ring, propose marriage, and then the couple set date as they typically would in romanticized version of Western marriages. The engagement process has culturally mutated to accommodate children who find spouses on their own. Thus, for Leah and Lokesh, they certainly felt they were engaged, but their parents did not consider them formally engaged until the families all got together for the appropriate ceremonies. Hence, “that is the day you decided to get married.” Parents can also have great influence on the date and location of the wedding.

In the next narrative, Mansi and Mohnish have a similar situation. They focused on how they got to the proposal, but did not discuss the engagement process.

Mansi: So this was fall of [year] is when we met. It was usually a summer class and there were only like six or seven students in the class. So I guess nothing really happened for the first semester and then in January, over the break, is when I guess we really started talking and then I guess we went on our first date sort of in March. But and I was living at home. He was living in a dorm, but I was living at home with my parents and my parents caused a lot of interference.

Interviewer: Did they know you – so if you started dating in March, you didn’t tell them right away that you were dating, did you?

Mansi: Of course we did. Because I was living at home, my parents were aware of all the phone calls. He used to call me, so they were – there were no cell phones back then and so they were aware of the calls. Yeah.

Interviewer: What did they think?

Mansi: Well, my dad actually thought that he was just another guy who – he will just fool around with her and leave. I guess it’s a typical – now, in hindsight, probably a typical dad reaction. My mom actually encouraged me to talk to him. She said oh, he seems to be like a nice guy. Maybe you should talk to him. I was kind of an introverted, shy person back then.

Interviewer: Well, were they happy though that you were from the same state in India?

- Mansi: Yes, they were. They were, but like I said, my dad was very suspicious.
- Interviewer: So that was in March. Did you tell your parents, Mohnish?
- Mohnish: It was funny. So I talked to her mother on the phone at some point and she said something to the effect of if you guys want to continue seeing each other, we need to meet your parents or at least say hello and chat with them or whatever. We were at [a different city] at the time. So it was kind of like we need to at least meet them by phone and kind of know who they are and where they came from and ...
- Mansi: And this was kind of in response to my dad's fears that he [Mohnish] might run away. So if the parents meet, at least there's some –
- Mohnish: Lower likelihood.
- Mansi: Yes. (laughter)
- Interviewer: But that sort of puts it into a more serious relationship mode. Were you comfortable with that?
- Mohnish: It took a while, but I don't know, in our culture, I think it's – there's no notion of like kind of casual dating. The whole reason why you interact with anyone is that it's an evaluation process from moment number one. Not let's see if we have common interests and then in six months, we'll see if it develops into anything. Whether you realize it or not, that is happening kind of from the get go.
- So, but my father said something interesting, basically cemented that notion and he said that – he goes, look, you better figure out what your intentions are and figure them out now. So he forced the issue on me and kind of said, so it wasn't going to be this all right, she seems like a nice girl I can kind of have fun with, that kind of thing. It was kind of like all right, this is how it works. So that's happening and I remember being on the phone with her and I told her – actually I told her metaphorically. I said, "Hey, I talked to my parents and this is kind of what they said. I guess if we want to continue seeing each other, this could be a very long ride. So are you willing to kind of go on that ride?" There was, now in retrospect, what appeared to be like this 15 second pause on the phone and then she said, "yeah."

From his account, it appeared as though Mohnish very casually decided to propose marriage. After talking with his father, it seemed he paused only for a moment and then

decided marrying Mansi was not a bad thing. Even so, his metaphoric marriage proposal was actually conveyed through his father's words. That is, he relayed the conversation with his father as a way to ask Mansi to marry him. Nonetheless, he remembered the specific conversation that he had with his father. The proposal may seem causal to the Western reader, but the fact that Mohnish clearly remembered the moment he decided to marry Mansi as well the long pause for her to respond, was clearly sentimental. This excerpt illustrated another way that people integrate culture within their lives. Parents do not tend to socialize second-generation children to "dating" as part of mate selection. For some participants, a lengthy dating period may seem unusual or uncomfortable. Also, this excerpt illustrated the gendered aspect of marriage. Both fathers were concerned about the reputation of the woman. Social networks are strong within the Indian American community and numerous relationships can lower the eligibility of a woman.

ON OUR OWN TERMS

This last category represents the marriages where the couple negotiated their relationships from start to finish. Couples met "on their own" and dated an extended period of time before marriage. In all of these cases, the parents did not dictate or overly influence when marriage would occur. On the parental involvement continuum, this approach is to the left of the center, but not all the way to the left end point. None of my participants described a marital approach that was devoid of any parental involvement (an elopement would be an example of an approach on the far most left endpoint).

Two of the couples lived together before marriage or while engaged. While the couples maintained autonomy, in the Western sense, parents were not completely out of

the loop. Couples did inform parents of their relationships and were concerned about their parents' reactions.

In the first narrative, Jyoti and Jay were friends before they were officially dating. They were part of a group of friends or they had friends in common. Jyoti is a few years older than Jay. Usually, in Indian matches, the man is approximately five years older. Universally, the cultural belief is that the man should be older than the woman and earn more money.

Jyoti: Well – when we were friends –

Jay: I had a girlfriend at the time.

Jyoti: I was dating other people and we would just talk and talk about our other, you know, our significant others and he was – he's like three years younger than I am so back then, you know, that made me like 25 and him 22 and so I wasn't really looking at a 22-year-old boy as someone I would really, uh, try to date. But...

Interviewer: He wasn't on your radar –

Jay: I don't think either one of us were on each other's radar.

Jyoti: Yeah he might have thought I was too old. I don't know.

Jay: Well, the thing is, like, you know I had a girlfriend at the time for like two-and-a-half years. But, it was just falling apart and it just got to a point where like we were just together for the sake of time. Like it wasn't even – like there was a lot that was lost. And so I think that's part of even our conversations like when we were talking, like, you know, about the experiences that we were having then.

Interviewer: And you both [from same Indian state,] right?

Jay: Yes, yeah.

Interviewer: Was that just coincidental when you started dating or was it important?

- Jay: Being [from the same Indian state?]
- Jyoti: A lot of our friends are. It's pretty important to me, I think, because I dated people who were not Indian and not [Indian state] and that was fine but when I came time to thinking about kind of long-term things, you know, with the whole integration into the family and language and religion – not even just like the [Indian state] part but the religion part, you know, raising kids the same way kind of thing. So that's when it became important to me.
He broke up with his girlfriend. I was just kind of dating so I didn't have anyone to break up with.
- Jay: We dated for like a year and a half.
- Jyoti: We dated from August [year] and then we got engaged May [year] and then married May [year].
- Jay: Right. She's good with the timeline.
- Interviewer: Did you parents know you were dating?
- Jay: Initially no.
- Jyoti: I told my parents at a family wedding which was, what, six months into-six to nine months into dating is when I –
- Interviewer: And how did they react?
- Jyoti: They were fine with it. I think they kind of were just hoping that I would find someone. Well I mean I wasn't old by any means but I was at that point what, 26 or something, about there. They get antsy [that I'm not] And they were never ones to really, really hound me about it. But I think they were just happy that I, you know, kind of met someone.
- Interviewer: And what about you? Did you tell your parents?
- Jay: I eventually told my parents.
- Jyoti: Well I met your mom at [a family member's] wedding. So when was that?
- Jay: Yeah but you didn't meet her really in that –
- Interviewer: Oh she didn't know she was your – your mom didn't know she was your girlfriend?

- Jay: I don't think so. I thought – I don't know. Our parents weren't thrilled about it. Because my parents are more – they're more traditional in the sense of, like, you know, the guy should be older and should make more money.
- Jyoti: Oh my parents had those issues, too, but –
- Interviewer: You're saying your parents specifically discussed this with you?
- Jay: Oh yeah. Yeah. They specifically were like, you know, do you think that's wise? She's three years older. You know maybe your timeline is different than her timeline. Because they, I mean my parents, didn't really know my timeline either, you know. And then education-wise, you know, they were like well if you still want to do a masters, she's already, you know, a [professional career]. I mean do you want to go back to school or you don't want to go back to school? So it was – it was a little uphill battle for me. I don't know if it just like a – a natural instinct for parents to just give you that push back and then, you know, you justify yourself and you show that you're really serious about it and then they're like OK, you know? I mean after, you know, after some push back it was just like OK well if that's what you want and that's what's going to make you happy, you know.
- Interviewer: So then did you get the push from the parents like OK you've been dating long enough, are you going to get married? Was anybody then antsy for you to get married?
- Jyoti: No I mean – my mom – you know, it's funny. I think they fought it. But my parents just have never been ones to really, you know, articulate that. I think finally when, you know, we did say oh, you know, let's talk to his family, you should meet his family and all that. I mean, I think they were happy that it was kind of moving more quickly. But if I took, you know, another two years, I don't know that they would have really said much to me. Because you know I think we kind of established when I was a little bit younger like when I was in [graduate school] and they started pushing me a little bit about meet this person, meet this person, you know, you're 25, whatever. I have kind of a stubborn personality or I'm the outspoken type of person so I would basically just say I'm just going to do what I want to do on my own timeline and, so they kind of learned that pushing isn't really going to get them anywhere.
- Interviewer: Well did they ask you is this the guy you're going marry?
- Jay: I think Mom asked you.
- Jyoti: Ah you know I can't even remember.

Jay: I think Mom asked you because I remember you –

Jyoti: I mean I'm sure she did but I really don't remember.

Interviewer: What about your parents? Were they?

Jay: My parents weren't pushing me at all because I was still young, you know, so they were just like well you're 25. Are you sure you want to get married? We think you're still young. Take your time. Don't rush. And like for me, growing up with my brother's five years older than me. So I kind of was always around older people. And so I was already at the point where, especially after my last relationship, I knew what I was looking for. You know I knew what I had and what I didn't have in that relationship and I knew exactly what I wanted in [marriage]. I was ready it was basically like well I know you guys think I may be rushing but I'm fine. And you know once I convinced them of that they were like OK.

I asked them if their parents were happy that they had chosen to marry someone who was Indian. Interestingly, first-generation parents preferred their children marry not only someone who is Indian, but also from the same caste and Indian state. For couples who married someone from another Indian state or from another caste, parents did not try to prevent the marriage, but did voice their concerns about family differences. Jay and Jyoti were from the same state; in this situation the concern was the life course differences. Jay said he “convinced” them that it was the right decision for him. His parents' opinion about his marital decision mattered to him.

Couples who met in college tended to have an extended dating period. This is probably due to the fact that parents considered them too young to get married. Darshan and Deepa dated for several years before they got married.

Darshan: Yeah, we were really open.

Deepa: No. Well, yeah. In the overall big picture, we were pretty open. At first, we started to date in October that year. So it was right away freshman year and then I didn't tell my parents. But they had a clue by November

because I think you sent me flowers or something over Thanksgiving break or something like that.

Darshan: Special friend.

Deepa: Yeah. That's right. My mom called him my special friend after that. But by December break, winter break, I brought him home and I went to visit his family and then everybody knew and it was all just accepted after that. Everyone looked at it like boy, did we break ground by just doing that. But I wasn't able to lie to my family; I'm very close to my parents.

Paresh and Priyum also met in college. During his individual interview, Paresh explained how he actually met Priyum.

Paresh: I remember when [his roommate] was still dating her, and we obviously didn't have any intentions of being together like that while she was – or even after. It just transpired that way because we kept talking. We were friends for a long time. I remember our first conversation. I was waiting for my pizza to come, and he was on the phone with her. And we didn't have call waiting at the time, so I'm telling him to get off the phone. I'm making all these comments, and I'm making him laugh kind of. I'm just making funny comments, and she's, like, "Who is that guy? He's a character." So he gives me the phone, and I talked to her, and we ended up talking for an hour on that one conversation. She called – and I'm like, "Oh, let me hang up. Call me back later." And I didn't really eat the pizza. We just had chemistry.

But at that time it was more friends. And then it just kind of transpired. I was very upfront and honest with my roommate and I told him. When I met her, I just felt that that was the right thing. And I wanted to get to know her more and more so that way I know that I'm marrying the right person. And then there were three months after that we just talked. I'm, like, "Why is she still calling me? I don't feel right doing this because he's my friend," this and that. But then I was, like, "You know what, I can't control how I feel anymore." Then I started calling her after. I would sit there for a couple of hours and just talk with her. But anyway so that's when I came to college second year, we were just clicking at that time. And we both enjoyed each other's company.

Interviewer: So that's your college experience?

Paresh: Yeah. Because the next three years I spent with her.

During the joint interview, the account was comparatively perfunctory. They also reported that they dated for about six years before marriage. Paresh stated that, “Because the divorce rates here is 50 percent or greater, and we just wanted to make sure we’re meeting the right person.” Paresh seemed to be advocating a more Western approach to marriage, meaning that a lengthy dating period should precede marriage. After marriage, this couple bought a “family” house; Paresh’s parents with them. Paresh did not describe his views on marriage as either Western or Indian. His family formation was not explicitly defined as a deliberate cultural approach. In keeping with a common tradition in India, six couples reported that they either currently live with the husband’s parents or did for a period immediately after the wedding.

Among my participants, the last two narratives represented the most individualistic approaches to matrimony. Similar to the preceding narrative, parents exerted very little influence over how the couple met or when they decide to marry as well. However, throughout the interview couples did include their parents’ thoughts (or their perception about what their parents think,) on various topics.

Ashna: We met in a club. (laughter) I don’t need to give you details. (laughter)

Interviewer: So did you start a relationship immediately?

Ashna: We did. Yeah.

Interviewer: At that time, what were you doing? Were you living on your own, or with your parents?

Ashna: Yeah, I was on my own. I had a roommate in the city, yeah. And then he was living by himself in the city.

Interviewer: So how long – did immediately you share with your family that you were dating each other?

Ashna: Not immediately, but probably – maybe – I’d say like a month, two months after. Yeah. And then my mom finally met him – actually, when did she meet – she met you six – how long were we dating? Six – no, more than that, right? I don’t remember. (laughter) But it took a while. I didn’t introduce him right away, but I think it probably took about – maybe four months. Four, five months. Actually, I don’t think it was four, five months, right? She met you when we were going to move in together? Right?

Aditya: Yeah.

Interviewer: How long were you dating when you realized you were going to get married?

Ashna: A year and a half. Yeah, so it was pretty quick.

Of the couples who reported that they “dated,” Aditya and Ashna had one of the shortest period. Although this couple demonstrated the least parental involvement, Ashna hesitated to tell her parents about her relationship, though marrying a co-ethnic was always their objective.

In the last narrative, Nita and Nikhil not only dated, but visited family in India while dating. Typically, visiting family elders in India while dating is forcing Western culture against Indian culture, but this couple described a more supportive family setting. Nikhil and Nita met at an organization for Indian professionals. I asked Nikhil if he expected to meet someone at these functions.

Nikhil: Not marriage, but thinking I’d like to meet someone and whatever happens, happens, but I was bored. Yeah, and I just felt like I was stagnating socially. Like I’m not meeting any new people at my job. I’m with the same few friends that I hang out with. I need to meet more people. That’s all I was thinking.

Nita: I had been going there since the beginning.

- Nikhil: She was going long before that. I think we were leaving, right? I mean I was there, I was leaving, and you were –
- Nita: I was talking with some guy that I just met. But everybody who was there and the whole – you know, the way it worked is you just hand out your business cards. I mean everybody over there is actually there to make professional contacts.
- Nikhil: Not everybody. There were people there just for the social aspect of it too.
- Nita: Yeah, I mean both reasons. A lot of us did after, but you would just meet people and you gave out business cards and this was OK, what – the first question you would ask anybody who had a business card (inaudible) was what do you do? You know, I have a [business] and this is what I do and here, do you have [a need for my] services and you know, and then you strike up a dialogue and see if you can work together and then of course some people like Nikhil would come.
- Interviewer: So you're walking out and you happen to be –
- Nikhil: Yeah, struck up conversation just for a few minutes.
- Nita: Struck up conversation and then I left.
- Nikhil: She didn't come -this was February. She didn't come again until May.
- Nita: Yeah.
- Nikhil: And I came March, April.
- Interviewer: So you see each other again a few months later.
- Nita: In May, yeah. And then we were –
- Nikhil: Then I sat across from her. On purpose.
- Nita: I didn't know, but we were – you know, it would be long tables and you would just –
- Interviewer: So you didn't know he was scoping?
- Nita: No. (laughter)
- Nikhil: Completely oblivious.

- Nita: So we were sitting in silence and then he started – I think we briefly spoke and then we were talking about traveling. He was getting ready to go on a trip to Amsterdam and Prague. And then I was also thinking of going to Amsterdam to visit my brother.
- Nikhil: Her brother lived in Amsterdam.
- Nita: So then I said well, you know, if you're in Amsterdam and you need places to go or whatever, just call my brother. And so that's how I think I gave you – and then I told him well, then he talked to my brother and then you know, I'll give you a call, here's my number. Yeah, something like that.
- Interviewer: Then you come back and I guess you called her.
- Nikhil: No, we went out to dinner before.
- Nita: No, after – before. We went out before.
- Nikhil: One night before. Two nights – on a Wednesday and I left on a Friday to go to –
- Nita: Something like that.
- Interviewer: So you came back from Europe and you resume, I suppose?
- Nita: He called me I think before one day and then we did go out, right?
- Nikhil: No, I called you on Sunday night and you said no for no apparent reason.
- Nita: Then so he called me [again].
- Nikhil: No, then we said, how about Wednesday I think, that same conversation. Then you were like oh, OK, I guess so.
- Interviewer: How long from there do you think that you would say you were quote officially dating or you were in a relationship?
- Nikhil: The week after I came back. Probably.
- Nita: We went out again and then after that, we were pretty much together –
- Nikhil: Every day.
- Nita: Every day for about four months and then I think –

- Nikhil: And then we went to India together.
- Interviewer: Oh, you went to India together before you got married?
- Nita: I was going to India to visit my mom –
And he said, “Well, I want to come too.” So he said, “I haven’t been in a while, so I want to come too.” So I was like OK, sure. So we both went together. It was just – you know, we hadn’t –
- Nikhil: We hadn’t talked about anything more. Marriage or anything. Actually that’s when that happened.
- Interviewer: When you were in India, did you have family there making assumptions about your relationship at that point?
- Nikhil: Yes.
- Nita: They asked me.
- Nikhil: They would say, “So what are you guys –
- Nita: So what are you guys thinking?
- Nikhil: What’s the plan?
- Interviewer: I would think that in India though, some of the older generations might make the assumption that if you two were together traveling then –
- Nikhil: No, we were in my grandparents’ place. We had two single beds. My grandfather, who is 80 years old, [said], “look, just push the beds [together]. Yeah. My grandfather. Yeah. He was like just push the bed together. I don’t know why your grandmother separated them.
- Nita: And even when we went to visit my grandmother after that –
- Nikhil: We slept in the same room, same bed. Her grandmother doesn’t care.
- Nita: This was before we had even decided to get married.
- Nikhil: This was before we had decided to get married. We hadn’t even talked about anything.
- Nita: Yeah. What are you guys thinking?
- Nikhil: So what are you guys thinking? What is your agenda? Or something.

- Nita: Something like that. So it was like, I don't know. So –
- Nikhil: So then we started talking, so what do you think? Should we?
- Interviewer: So they're putting the thought in your head, like you hadn't really thought about it before?
- Nikhil: I can't say it hadn't occurred.
- Interviewer: So when – did you propose in India?
- Nikhil: Yeah, that was proposal. I just told you.
- Interviewer: Oh. (laughter)
- Nikhil: That was the proposal.
- Interviewer: Kind of like a mutual agreement maybe.
- Nikhil: Yeah. So should we or shouldn't we?
- Nita: I'm like how about if we wait for two years, and he's like well –
- Nikhil: What's the point?
- Nita: What's the point in waiting for two years? I think we were both comfortable in that, where we know, so there was never a proposal.
- Nikhil: No, that was the proposal.
- Nita: Yeah, that was proposal.
- Nikhil: We've always been completely informal.
- Nita: Well, it's very comfortable, I guess. Yeah, that –
- Nikhil: No formality.

Although the informal proposal was presented as though it was entirely their decision, I did wonder if family elders exerted some pressure to validate their relationship. Perhaps grandparents allowed Nita and Nikhil to sleep in the same bed because they assumed they were

heading to matrimony. Nonetheless, this last narrative represents the most individualistic approach. As with the preceding narrative, the couple did not report that parents were involved in how they met or their decision to marry. I included the long excerpt because of the back and forth dialogue of Nita and Nikhil. As they discussed how they met and came to marry, they alternated in telling the story, at times finishing each other's sentences. Their alternating conversation style was allegorical for their matrimonial approach. Other than the mention of grandparents, their parents' input was absent. That does not mean that they were not involved, but they were not discussed in this marriage tale.

This last category of marriage tales may lack parental involvement, but marrying a co-ethnic was important to these couples. It was not overtly discussed, but as parents, sharing their culture with their partner was important.

CONCLUSION

The couples in my study told rich narratives about how they met and eventually married. Rather than estimate "Indianness" based on whether the couple had an arranged marriage or met on their own, I wanted to provide a more nuanced account of how my participants negotiated the meaning associated with marriage. Marrying a co-ethnic certainly demonstrates a desire to maintain culture, but beyond that, I wanted to understand how people give meaning to culture within their lives. Thus, exploring matrimonial process revealed the salience of their Indian American identity in their lives. In some instances, the participant may have explicitly stated that their intent was to marry a co-ethnic. For other parents in my study, it was not stated so clearly or, in fact, participants believed that marriage to a co-ethnic was not intentional; it just "happened." Their habitus is comprised of habitual, generative practices that give meaning to

the marriage approach (Bourdieu 1977). These practices may be unexamined to the extent that my participants internalize them, but they are cognizant of the meaning or importance that marrying a co-ethnic has for maintaining Indian culture.

Marrying a co-ethnic strengthens community bonds at the macro- and micro-levels. Ironically, while intended to unite people through appreciation of perceived differences, multicultural policies can actually result in ethnic segregation. Multiculturalism encourages a “heightened ethnic identity” and pride in maintaining and displaying ethnicity. Consequently, Indian Americans develop ethnic enclaves for both business and residential districts (Sheel 2008: 220). Ethnic communities provide a sense of security and solidarity, and unfortunately increase social distance from “so-called mainstream or dominant White community” (p. 220).

At the macro-level, marrying within culture builds the community. It is not necessarily through immigration (i.e. new members increasing the population) that the community is strengthened and maintained, but rather through marriage. Marriage accomplishes this in two ways. First, marrying a co-ethnic reinforces the boundaries between “Indian culture” and mainstream American society thereby creating the distinction between “us” and “the Americans” (Lessinger 2002: 101). As a cultural experience, marriage is a tangible display of ethnicity. This display represents the religious, gender, and family beliefs of the ethnic community. Consequently, marrying outside culture, or marrying a non-Indian, may negate one’s ethnic authenticity in the eyes of the other co-ethnics. Second, marrying within culture provides membership to a social network that is viewed as necessary for educating the next generation. That is, second-generation parents consider participation in the Indian American community as a way to socialize third-generation children to Indian culture (Dhingra 2007).

At the micro-level, participation in the Indian American community is a component of an Indian American identity. Traditions, food, language, religion, and parental expectations do not need to be explained (or perhaps defended) to a co-ethnic. Similarly, participants in my current study held the expectation that they would share their lives and raise children with someone who held the same cultural values.

CHAPTER 4:

PLAYING THE CULTURAL AMBASSADOR

In exploring ethnic identity construction, I found that mainstream American non-Indians frequently place Indian Americans in a position to answer questions about India and Indian culture. Thus, my participants are called upon to be “cultural ambassadors” to curious non-Indians. Initially, I was surprised to find not only the prevalence of this phenomenon, but that my participants did not mind this constant questioning. It was perplexing to me that they were not offended, as many of the questions seemed invasive. For example, casual work colleagues might ask if someone’s marriage was arranged, what kind of food is cooked in the home, and whether they wear Indian clothes. Against a backdrop of United States multiculturalism, perhaps this line of questioning is benign.

For the non-Indians, these questions are useful in determining the social position of the Indian American. With non-white skin and non-Anglo sounding names, Indian Americans have “perpetual” immigrant status. “Western” and “white” maintain cultural domination over Asia and Asian Americans (Kim and Chung 2005: 73). Hence, native born and white underscore the image of a “true American.” Racial and cultural “othering” are often covert. Non-Indians inquire curiously, “Where are you from?” Embedded in this question is the view that, “You don’t look like me, so you must be from somewhere else.” Moreover, this “cultural ambassador” role assumes Indian Americans actively cultivate an Indian identity, that they possess a comprehensive knowledge of India, and can speak for a very diverse country.

Initially, I asked participants about their experiences with prejudice, their opinion of representations of Indians in the media, and their perceptions of how members of the dominant

group in the United States view India and Indian culture. Without probing further, I found that participants did not readily discuss explicit or implicit experiences of prejudice. And, surprisingly, they tended to deflect and normalize their experiences in a multicultural discourse. Participants were more likely to call attention to their particular social location than speak specifically about Indian Americans as a marginalized group. That is, they preferred to place Indian Americans within a greater racial-ethnic hierarchy of the United States. They recognized that Indian Americans are just one of the different marginalized racial-ethnic groups in the United States. Thus, “I am not the only one this has happened to” was a common sentiment. Approximately half of the participants did directly discuss their thoughts and experiences with racism. While the other participants reported that they did not believe they had ever experienced overt racist or prejudicial behavior. In general, all participants amenablely accepted the “cultural ambassador” role and presented this phenomenon as innocuous, albeit constant.

JUST ANOTHER PART OF THE AMERICAN LANDSCAPE

I found that when participants discussed what they thought mainstream America might think about India and Indians, they tended to include other marginalized groups. This deflection occurred specifically when asked about experiences with prejudice or racism. I asked Anish if he thought Indian Americans were well represented in the media. He responded by saying the following:

I would say the number of Indians in the country could be comparable to a lot of different ethnicities. Jewish as well. There are so many ethnicity where we've caught up [in numbers.]. Whether it's Mexicans or Puerto Ricans, or whatever, right? But the thing with the other communities is, at the government level, they're very well represented. There's a lot of local representation in ethnicity. We're starting to get there.

Anish embedded his response in a discussion about many different racial ethnic groups. He made this comparison rather than focus on what he believed were the perceptions of mainstream Americans. In another interview, I asked Bimal the same question.

Well, I mean initially it was definitely very negative from *The Temple of Doom* as the classic. But, nowadays I think that that US authority has become a lot more sensitive. I mean minorities in general, I was always shocked even as a child as to how insensitive it could be. Like you watch your Tom and Jerry cartoon and when the bomb blew up in Tom's face, he looked like a classic Sambo character. Burn on his face, fat lips, the frizzy hair. Or like Bugs Bunny outwitting the dimwitted Native Americans to scalp him and whatnot. I mean you watch these cartoons today, I have to be very selective [concerning what his child watches on TV].

Both participants deflected the attention from specifically discussing the situation of Indian Americans. Bimal basically described a general problem with the media. I wanted him to talk more about *Indiana Jones and The Temple of Doom*. Besides culturally othering India, this film also has some inaccuracies, such as suggesting that Indians eat monkey brains. Instead, Bimal deflected to a general problem with the way the media portrays minorities. Mansi also referenced the struggles of other groups in the United States

As far as this specificity of our ethnicity, I don't think that we have a harder time than any other minority, or any other person of color, or group of color, in the States, because I think African-Americans have it harder, I think [South]Asian-Americans have it much easier than the East Asian Americans. Native Americans have it worse.

She presented her view of where groups are on a scale by how the dominant group perceives each of the marginalize groups. In this way they show the commonality of the experience of being different from the dominant (white) group in the United States This narrative

fits within the multicultural landscape by not calling attention to the struggles of one particular group. That is, Indian Americans may have experienced cultural “othering” or racism, but this experience is shared by other groups as well. Moreover, the tone is not outrage or resentment, but rather a manner of resignation. “It is what it is, but we’re not the only marginalized group.” As Indian Americans integrate into mainstream American society, this standpoint will be advantageous at the societal level because they are not likely to be viewed as militant or angry “immigrants.”

LIFE AFTER APU: INDIAN AMERICANS IN THE MEDIA

Years ago, one of the few Indians on TV was Apu, an animated character from *The Simpsons*. Apu’s “brown voice” defined him as Indian. Interestingly, the actor supplying the accent, is a non-Indian. Today, Indian Americans occasionally show up in television and movies. Participants were aware of more Indian Americans in mainstream shows and cinema. Actor Kal Penn and the medical advisor on CNN, Dr. Sanjay Gupta, are the new representations in television and film for Indian Americans. These two Indian Americans were mentioned by several of my participants.

Anish: Like if you’re imagining in the movie – what was it called?
“*The Namesake*,” right? That guy Kal Penn, right?

Amira: He is in everything.

Anish: Well, getting back to her negativity part. He had very negative roles 10 or 15 years, or 10 years ago, that’s kind of belittling. But now, he’s a force to be reckoned with. He’s not taking little roles. He’s coming up in *Law & Order*, and he’s coming up here, and he’s coming up there.

Amira: Yeah. He’s in lot of TV shows.

Anish: He’s getting some decent roles now.

Amria: He was in *Superman* or *Spiderman*.

Anish: *Superman, Superman*, yeah.

This couple mentioned not only the increased representation of Indian Americans, but that they believed that the images are positive. In contrast to the image of India in *Indiana Jones The Temple of Doom*, Kal Penn is a “force to be reckoned with.” Jay and Jyoti provided similar accounts as noting that Indian Americans are slowly penetrating other forms of media as well.

Jay: It’s just nice to see an Indian face like Kal Penn on a big movie or like, Sanjay Gupta on his [CNN bits.] Like those things for me are huge.

Jyoti: Yeah. And it’s nice to see Indians in roles like as a newscaster whatever or in some kind of commercial where it’s not dependent on them being Indian you know? It’s like I saw a print ad. I think it was a print ad where it was like a woman and her two daughters were, you know it’s, you know a deodorant commercial or something – Secret. And it – it didn’t matter that they were Indian. But they were – you know they could have been anything. It’s not like it was for something specifically Indian-related. And but it just happened to be in the – in the ad.

In true multicultural discourse, Jyoti believes that Indian Americans are beginning to penetrate the media as a visible group. There are definitely more representation, but what is the quality of these roles? Does the stereotype of nerdy model minority prevail? The television show, *Big Bang Theory*, centers on the experiences of nerdy scientists. The entire cast is white men with the one requisite Indian American man. Despite the significant population of second-generation Indian Americans, this character has an accent and is first-generation Indian American. Perhaps, instead of the nerdy Indian, the image of Indian as owner of motels and gas stations is more dominant. When an Indian American is cast in a peripheral role cultural stereotypes are reinforced. Heera noted this tendency, “Like none of the *Desperate Housewives* is an Indian

woman but her doctor probably is.” Participants were split on deciding whether Indian Americans are well represented or not. Nonetheless, the number of representation on shows and cinema has increased. Lokesh stated the issue in this way:

You know what would expand our representation in the media, right, is that Indian people have shown up on ER as doctors. You are seeing them, right? But you don’t see them in corporate suit positions on TV. You don’t see them as bankers, you don’t see them as lawyers, [and] as real mega-industry leaders, which is really what’s going on across all industries. Health care, banking, and so forth. I mean, every industry, you’re going to see directors, vice presidents who are now Indians. But that representation is not seeping through [to media] so people think we’re just the hotel owners or the gas station owners.

There exists a disconnection between representations of Indians in the media and the actual trend of occupations in the paid workforce. Until conduct and culture are more synchronized, Indians will continue be associated with ownership of hotels and gas stations. Changing stereotypical images of Indian Americans cannot be accomplished by simply increasing the number in the media. Besides the tendency to relegate Indians to particular occupations, they are also culturally stereotyped. This stereotyping may be insidiously accomplished through accent.

Bindu: I’ve seen some movies where there’s an Indian character
But he’s, even if he’s an Indian American, he has a proper accent.

Bimal: They emphasize the culture instead of the character itself.

By proper accent, Bindu simply meant he had an “Indian” accent. Implying, that if the person were Indian American, he would probably have an “American” accent (or lack of accent.) This kind of stereotyping reinforces the image of Indian American- whether first- or second-generation- as “perpetual” immigrant. In terms of negotiating an ethnic identity, Indian Americans are aware of mainstream America’s view of them. Despite the reluctance to speak

directly about prejudicial behavior, my participants are nevertheless aware of the negative stereotypical images of Indians.

EXPERIENCING RACISM

My participants were not in agreement on whether they believed the increased presence in the media represented positive change in image or reinforcing stereotypes, nor was there consensus on whether they had ever experienced racism or prejudicial behavior from non-Indians. While all acknowledged that there may have been minor events, such as name calling as children, most participants said they did not recall incidents of overt racism, but a few did share specific incidents. Consider the following excerpt:

- Bimal: And he [wife's co-worker] would get nasty sometimes. You were so upset the day when he suggested you go fetch him a Slurpie or whatever.
- Bindu: Yeah, a Slurpie, instead of something.
- Bimal: You didn't take that very well.
- Interviewer: He said that to you?
- Bindu: Yes. He said that to me.
- Interviewer: How did you react? What did you do?
- Bindu: Yeah, I just laughed. I mean because that was clearly being very racial, you know?
- Bimal: Well, see a lot of people I've notice will sometimes like to hide their racism as a little joke and stuff.
- Bindu: Yeah, I just think my boss was there and they all said that it wasn't clearly right to say those things, but I just didn't make a big thing out of it.
- Bimal: You'll encounter these people who will actually usually put just enough humor in it to get away with it.

In the face of overt racism, Bindu chose to ignore or laugh away any offense amongst her co-workers, rather than confront inappropriate behavior. Laughter is often a response to tension. Bindu's reaction demonstrated to her co-workers that she is a "good sport" and team player. Although Bimal did not discuss any specific incidents from his life, he was aware of strategies members of the dominant group employ to hide racism. Racist remarks can be camouflaged as simply a joke and the intended recipient, the Indian American, can comply with the appropriate response by laughing. Other participants reported insensitive or ignorant behavior in the workplace. One mother discussed her experience at work with diversity training.

It cracks me up because you have to teach about minorities and diversity [at work.] As a teacher, we get workshops on it. I am a minority in this room, and I'm in [home state]. I think it's funny because they have to do all this training, and [the fact] that I need lots of that training, so it makes me laugh. I've lived it. I can teach people something on it.

But that's when I notice it more. As they try to broaden other people's minds and that's when I'll look around and say, "Hey, I'm the only person that's not white in this room, aren't I?" And I say that now, within our friends' circle a little bit. There's a lot of stay-at-home moms in this town. I want more substitutes out there to be Indian. I think it's important for our children to see us just like everybody else. We really are not different from the rest of them, so why don't we just sub there? What's it going to take for you to go in there and sub once in a while for God's sake? It would make your kids happy, it would make every Indian child in the school comfortable to see you there. I realized after I started teaching that it means something to the Indian kids in the building that I exist, that someone like me can be.

The first part of this excerpt highlighted the irony of teaching appreciation for social diversity to someone who has "lived it." Ironically, the other people discuss diversity rhetoric while ignoring the only person of color in the room. In the second part of this mother's narrative, she suggested a way to improve the situation by increasing the number of Indian

American role models in the school. Interestingly, she was not suggesting that the stay-at-home moms change their paid work status, but pick up some part-time work that can have a positive impact for the Indian American community.

Perhaps one of the most egregious accounts of racism came from a father with two sons under five years old. This incident occurred while waiting outside an upscale department store. The language directed at his sons reflects a post-9/11 racial-ethnic climate in the United States

Nikhil: We were standing at the door and just waiting for Nita and her mom to come outside and they [sons] were just being kids, not doing anything bad, just talking, yelling, screaming – not even yelling and screaming. Just talking. Not talking in a regular normal level of volume. So this woman is walking in as we're standing near the door and she looked at them and looked at me and – am I allowed to swear? OK. I didn't know if I – she looked at them and looked at me and kind of under her breath, she goes, "fucking little camel jockies." And I heard her and I absolutely jumped all over her on that. I mean I confronted her.

Nita: He asked, he said, "what did you say? "

Nikhil: And she didn't deny it. She was like, "that's what they are."

Nita: That's what you are. That's what they are.

Nikhil: That's what you are and that's what they are and I was like ...

Nita: But it was towards them [young sons], which was very strange. I mean they're three years old.

Nikhil: I'm sure they learned a few words from me that day because I absolutely did not hold back.

While many participants acknowledges racism, only five participants openly discussed explicit experiences. It seemed as though participants were reluctant to classify or acknowledge that racist experiences had happened to them. Perhaps they preferred to attribute the act to one misinformed person rather than discuss ongoing incidents of racism. Participants may choose to forget. In general, the situation is either laughed off or ignored. With Nikhil, he may have felt

directly attacked and was motivated to defend his young sons. Leah discussed an incident from her childhood. As an adult, she did not believe she had experienced any racism, but this experience from her childhood remains very clear to her today.

The most palpable sense of racism, and I'll never forget this. And if I could talk to those people who did that to me. I think it's because I'm a mother now and I know what it means, but, when I was in [city] as a child, it's the stuff you don't understand when you're very little that really affects you. There were a couple of [white] families. I remember being invited to sleepovers with two little white girls. My parents let me go. I was going to this one particular girl's house, whose mother was not friends with my mother. I could just sense the way that she looked at me, the way that she said my name that she was prejudiced or she found me to be either lower class or somehow just inferior, repulsive. I sensed that at four and so much so that I kept it from my parents because, maybe I was subconsciously trying to protect them. But I never enjoyed spending time with those two little girls. Yet I remember once my mother, my parents, assumed that this one little girl was like one of my best friends. And I tried to sort of make that happen, being totally confused as to why I was being treated that way.

Leah acknowledged that she had only a feeling that the mother of the little white girl did not like her, though the woman may have actually said or did something more overt. Saying that she was trying to protect her parents does indicate her efforts to not make a big deal out of the situation or cause her parents any upset. The overall tenor of the dialogue concerning racism and prejudice was one of uncertainty that the incident had happened. My participants would give the non-Indian the benefit of the doubt. Otherwise, as with Leah, participants used self-protection strategy.

EDUCATING CURIOUS NON-INDIANS

When the interaction with non-Indians appears to be friendly, how do Indian Americans frame the racist or culturally othering experiences? Through the course of the interview, a pattern emerged where I became aware of the extensive and repetitive questions non-Indians ask

Indian Americans. What was perplexing to me was that none of the participants seemed to frame these questions as negative. While listening to the various accounts, I became offended for my participants. Consequently, I focused on why my participants were not offended by the questioning and also the manner in which they would frame the situation as a positive or neutral exchange. No matter the extent of the invasiveness of the questioning, the participant was likely to frame inquiry as innocuous. Once I noticed this recurrent theme, I began to ask the participants if they ever feel like a “cultural ambassador,” frequently fielding questions about India and Indian culture.

Amira: Yeah, always. In my work I have to always explain it to them. They’re very curious about certain things. Like marriage, how can you get married to somebody you don’t even know?

Anish: I always bring the example of royalty, like Prince Charles and Prince Di. And then they realize, “Oh yeah, what am I asking?” It happens, what’s happening in India, all over the world. It just doesn’t happen here at a larger scale. They want to marry within the same – I won’t say caste, but the bloodline and this and that, it’s not as much in last 100 years. But prior to 100 years, it was very common all over the world, besides the US.

Inquiries about arranged marriage were very common. Amira described how the tone of the inquiry was not respectful. Characterizing arranged marriages as the union of two strangers takes the position that arranged marriages are inferior. Clearly, the non-Indian speaker was not an advocate of this matrimonial approach. Although put on the defensive, Anish complied with this type of question about arranged marriage. He attempted to find some common ground or shared understanding. Despite reporting the racist attack in the preceding section, Nikhil, stated that he is not offended by such inquiries. Because he is married to a co-ethnic, I asked Nikhil if non-Indians ask if his marriage was arranged.

Nikhil: Yes.

Nita: Yes.

Interviewer: You do get that?

Nikhil: Oh, all of the time.

Nita: That's all of the time.

Nikhil: That, you get all the time.

Interviewer: How do you feel about that?

Nikhil: Most people assume that all Indians have arranged marriages. I don't care. It doesn't bother me that they think we have an arranged married.

This sentiment would not be remarkable if non-Indians had a favorable view of arranged marriage. Implicit in the question concerning marriage is the sentiment, "how could you marry a stranger?" What was remarkable was that participants did not mind defending their culture. Mostly, participants framed these kinds of inquiries as a curiosity on the part of non-Indians. Consequently, they did not process these questions as offensive.

Vineeta: Unless we are very good friends or something and they say oh...

Vijay: Curiosity. [finishing sentence for his wife].

Vineeta: Just curiosity. And they just want to know more.

"Curiosity" was the reoccurring word. As long as they perceive questions as motivated by "just curiosity," Indian Americans will oblige until they feel their culture is being criticized or denigrated.

Trisha: Because most of the time, discussion is as an inquisitive way. But the moment somebody will say –

- Taresh: That's a dumb thing or something like that, then –
- Trisha: Then you fight back right away. It has not happened many times, but, it did happen sometimes at work, sometimes. I said, "What do you know? What's the difference?" So, you fight back right away. But when we get asked in an inquisitive way, [such as] "I'm ignorant about it, I'm asking you," so that's OK.
- Taresh: It's not even ignorant. If you have the curiosity.
- Trisha: That's a good word. But if somebody ask in a curious way, that's great. That's fine. No problem. But somebody asking in a bad way, then you do defend that and defend it hard. There's nothing wrong with that.

The decision to comply with the inquiry or "defend it hard" depends on the context. Though, none of the participants described what would constitute a "bad way." By shaping the non-Indian as merely curious about Indian culture, first- and second-generation Indian Americans can in turn shape the verbal exchange as a teachable moment.

- Satish: I'd say -- I would encourage it [questions about Indian culture].
- Sheela: Yeah. Oh, yeah.
- Satish: I'd rather inform them and let someone who didn't know about Hinduism and let them know about Hinduism. Because I think we're what, about 1 percent of the United States population?

The size of the population of Indian Americans is increasing. Thus, Satish believed that he should be the cultural ambassador. That is, curious non-Indians should learn about India and Indian culture from an Indian American. Bimal normalized the questioning about Indian culture by pointing out that he answers questions about American culture for friends and family who visit from India.

- Bimal: People ask me and I'll explain to the best of my ability.

Interviewer: How do you feel about that?

Bimal: I enjoy teaching. It's something I enjoy.

Interviewer: Oh, you don't mind?

Bimal: No, not at all. And likewise a lot of people who come from India here, they always ask me about American culture. There's so many things they hear on TV that they don't understand because they don't know the background on it. So I explain, "Well, you know during the Civil Rights era, this happened and during this era, this happened and ..."

Bindu: I think to me when someone asks me about my culture, I think it's a very good thing. That they are taking interest and they want to learn.

In this brief excerpt Bimal equated questions about historical stages in American society with the constant questions about arranged marriages that others have had to answer.

In one instance, I tried to probe further to determine whether the participant truly was not offended. Because arranged marriages are not particularly popular in Western culture, I view this question as more invasive than simply inquiring about how one met one's spouse. Consider the exchange between Hiresh and Heera concerning arranged marriage.

Heera: Because there *are* some traditionally arranged marriages. My cousins had them.

Interviewer: Well, true.

Heera: Where they barely even met them.

Hiresh: Right. Right.

Heera: I mean, that's what Americans are thinking when they're asking that so that's...

Hiresh: So that's why I never take it personal.

Heera: If I say it wasn't like an arrangement like that, I say I was introduced to him [her husband] but that's about it.

- Interviewer: Do you think it's a personal question though? I mean to ask somebody that. You know what I mean?
- Heera: Oh, yeah. Sure it is.
- Interviewer: Regardless of whether or not, just the fact that you're Indian, "Oh, you must have had an arranged marriage."
- Heera: I don't get that very much here. It was more in probably [state where they used to live].
- Hiresh: I don't know. It doesn't bother me much. Of course, yeah, it is an odd question to ask. It's not like a very socially appealing question like asking how many kids you have. It's not like that. But yeah, when somebody asks this question to you, my immediate concept is that it's ignorance speaking here, so I need to educate this person. And that's OK. That's all right and I see there's no [negative intent]. You know what? That's the difference.
- Heera: No, but they're not ignorant, because that does happen in reality to many people. I'm just saying that that's not what happened with us.

My probing did result in Hiresh admitting that the inquiries about his marriage were slightly intrusive. Admittedly, I may have led him in this direction, but nevertheless, he did normalize the situation by framing it as an opportunity to educate the inquirer. Heera went further to normalize the cultural ambassador role by stating that arranged marriages do happen, so it is not unreasonable for non-Indians to make assumptions and ask questions based on this fact.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have demonstrated what the second-generation perceived as their position within United States. More specifically, I wanted to know what my participants think mainstream American society think about India and Indian culture. Their views on this perception will to some extent influence ethnic identity construction. Very few participants

discussed overt experiences of racism or prejudice. Approaching these perceptions through participants' accounts of racism was not going to yield very much information. Instead, I focused on my participants' thoughts about Indians in the media. Again, I had mixed responses. Participants shaped the changing representations of Indians in the media as both positive and negative. Moreover, Participants preferred not to speak specifically about the situation of Indian Americans in the United States, but referenced the general situation of other minority groups. They sought to align with other groups who also have been marginalized in mainstream society. Recognizing that mainstream America might not be familiar with Indian culture, participants amenable to answer questions about ethnicity. Despite the fact that the majority of the participants had not been socialized to Indian culture in India, they nonetheless patiently play this ambassador role. Why do my participants not find this constant questioning offensive? Perhaps the reason has to do with the multicultural discourse in the United States. Such metaphors as a mosaic, a melting pot, or a salad bowl have been used to describe the diversity of the United States population. Playing cultural ambassador is part of fitting into this multicultural landscape.

However, multicultural discourse is somewhat inherently flawed. In a society that claims to appreciate multiculturalism, cultural hegemony is covert and often masked as merely an effort to "understand" those who are "different" from oneself (a "self" presumed to be white and American). Prashad (2000) asserts that the notion of "assimilation" means to "make similar" and that to deny the core "Anglo-Saxon" culture is "tantamount to treason" (p. 110). Many Americans view the process of assimilation as making those who are different (i.e., new immigrants) similar to mainstream Americans. But, not everyone can or wants to become homogenized into the dominant United States culture.

Ethnicity is both optional and mandatory (Nagel 1994: 136.) Individuals negotiate ethnic identity within relational set of characteristics such as skin color and country of origin. As Nagel (1994) describes, the freedom to construct ethnic identity rests on the ethnic categories imposed by the dominant group. For example, white Europeans may assimilate into mainstream culture or claim ethnic identity depending on the situation. However, groups with brown skin or non-Anglo names may find ethnicity mandatory.

Unfortunately, there is a serious problem with the United States multiculturalism policies. Prashad (2000) writes, “it [overarching United States multiculturalism policy] pretends to be the solution to chauvinism rather than the means for a struggle against white supremacy” (p. 111). In other words, instead of challenging cultural hegemony, multiculturalism involves “different” ethnicities living agreeably with the dominant group. More importantly, multiculturalism requires that immigrant groups maintain and “present” their culture within the United States in agreeable way- meaning the cultural objects and experiences may not be in political opposition to the dominant group. Consequently, within mainstream American society, what is presented as “culture” becomes a stagnant monolithic “thing” rather than a “set of social relations” (p. 112). For example, arranged marriage is viewed as a cultural “thing,” rather than an experience because it is viewed in the most extreme expression (i.e., a loveless marriage between two strangers.) Perhaps more importantly, arranged marriage is a matrimonial approach that stands in contrast to the norms and values of Western culture, even as many aspects of Western marriage are culturally determined in similar ways. The majority of Americans tend to marry someone like themselves. People tend to marry someone of the same racial ethnic group, social class, and religion (Aulette 2007; Newman 2009,). Moreover, when people do marry outside their racial group or religious group they are almost always of the same social class (Newman

2004). Perhaps mainstream Americans are as pragmatic about their marital decisions as Indians after all.

At once, Indian Americans are required to speak for an entire country and, implicitly, they are expected to be experts on visible cultural markers. Rudrappa (2004) positions this “authenticity” within the landscape of American mainstream culture rather than within the Indian American community. Examining “cultural authenticity” is not a search for the “true” Indian, but an examination of cultural discourse that plays out in the social structures of a society. Within United States multiculturalism, Indian Americans are compelled to “conform to the celebratory version of culture that is on display” (Kurien 2004: 380). Being aware of their position in the ethnic hierarchy, Rudrappa (2004) argues that Indian Americans can never be the “true” American (read: white and Christian,) hence they are the “best” Indian they can possibly be within the mainstream dominant culture.

However, motivation to play the cultural ambassador should not rely solely on multicultural discourse. Indian Americans have agency in the choices that they make. Multiculturalism may ultimately homogenize ethnic groups, but these groups make the decision to comply or resist based on their perceived notion of their place on the racial ethnic hierarchy. Steinberg (2001) argues that mainstream American society should not be totally vilified in this scenario because ethnic groups make decisions for economic and social mobility. In general, second-generation Indian Americans choose the path of least resistance or engage in behaviors that will elicit a positive response from non-Indians and refrain from those that might be perceived as belligerent responses. For example, in the work environment, answering questions concerning Indian food may be more advantageous to one’s professional career than to refuse or

even reprimand the non-Indian. Of course, I also acknowledge that some participants may have genuinely enjoyed talking about Indian culture with non-Indians.

Eventually, these questions about ethnicity shape Indian ethnic identity insofar as they shape the cultural performance in the public space. Questions about certain aspects of Indian culture, such as food or arranged marriages, reinforce these as symbols. Moreover, playing cultural ambassador can highlight which cultural objects and experiences are public from those that are in the private space. Positioning “culture” in this way, provides insight into how Indian culture can be mediated through Western hegemonic culture.

CHAPTER 5:

RELIGION: COMMUNITY AND IDENTITY

HINDUISM IN THE UNITED STATES

At its foundation, Hinduism rests on three basic deities, Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. These deities represent creation, maintenance, and destruction, respectfully. There are numerous deities, such as Ganesh (elephant) or Krishna, that represent different incarnations of the original three. Consequently, Hindus pray to different representations. The set of deities vary greatly across family and region. Hinduism may be understood as abstract beliefs because there is no central text or centralized location of sacred writings such as the Bible. Due to this decentralized structure, the practice can vary from Indian state to state, or more specifically, from family to family (Beyer 2006). Hinduism is primarily practiced in the home through daily prayers and rituals. Because of this, Indian culture becomes interwoven with religious practice. Hindus go to the temple on particularly sacred days or to give an offering to the deities. Unlike Christians or Jews, Hindus do not go to the temple to hear a “sermon” or other religious teachings.

Historically, the British are largely responsible for the production of the modern Hindu (Beyer 2006). Under colonialism, the British shaped the abstract practices into something more comparable to Western religions. They also were the first to categorize Indians as Hindu or something else (i.e., Jain or Muslim). British census required Indians to declare belonging to one of the religious groups (Beyer 2006: 198). In the United States, Hinduism has actually become more centralized looking more like a congregation led by a Hindu priest (Purkayastha 2005). The Western effect on Hinduism results in “sifting through history, selectively emphasizing

some aspects, and ignoring others” (p. 97). Practicing Hinduism in the United States has reinforced a religion that looks more like Western religions. Indian Americans contribute to this transformation because they can build connection with non-Indians by sort of Westernizing Hinduism (Williams 2007). Non-Indians can relate or find commonality with Indian Americans when the latter use familiar vocabulary. For example, Indian Americans may equate going to temple with going to church, though Hindus generally go to temple on auspicious occasions or to give an offering to a deity. More important than relating to non-Indians, Indian Americans use religion to culturally identify with each other (Beyer 2006; Kurien 2004). Using religion as a way to build group membership further conflates ethnicity and religion.

As mentioned, Hindus do not typically go to a temple for congregational worship. Worship rituals take place in the home with family and close family friends. The rituals are called Pujas. Pujas are religious events involving a deity or deities. A priest usually conducts the Puja, but a family elder may also carry out the ritual. At the conclusion of the Puja, family and friends share a meal. The food may have been prepared by the woman who is hosting the Puja or other woman will bring different dishes. In general, Pujas occur at auspicious occasions such as the days leading up to a marriage, having a child, graduating from high school, or funeral. A Puja also may be held to help someone who is ill or troubled.

For Indian Americans, religion is central to constructing an ethnic identity (Kurien 2004; Min 2010,). Through religious events, people maintain their connection to co-ethnics and socialize children to the culture as well. The participants in my study reported different degrees of religiosity, but all believed that religious practice was an important part of the family’s culture. Across my participants, I found that maintaining religion was not as gendered as were

other cultural objects and experiences. For example, Aditya is Muslim and his wife, Ashna, is Hindu. I asked them which religion they practiced in their family.

Aditya: We say all of them. I do mantras, I do Buddhist mantras, I do Hindu mantras, I do like Christian, very Christian, Catholic sayings, kiddush Adonai, which is very Jewish, actually. So I say very – because I go by the meaning rather than what religion it came from. We feel like every religion has something to offer. It's for us to grasp and take it.

Interviewer: Do you meditate or pray every day?

Aditya: Yes.

Ashna: I don't do it every day, no.

Aditya: And I do mostly healings rather than praying to specific things. I do a lot of healing. So, my day will start with like burning incense, putting on some really chilled, relaxing music. Then I go into prayer mode, which is actually a mixture of all religious saints. That's what I pray to. I guess a melting pot, really. And then I do yoga, and then I do also Falun Dafa, which is like Chi Gong, I do that. So, I do a mixture of all kind of healings, and then a lot of time that's how my day starts.

Interviewer: What do you think that you'll teach your daughters?

Aditya: Everything.

Interviewer: Have you already started this, any sort of religious teaching?

Aditya: Yeah. We do a lot of – my daughters love om mani padme om, actually. I do that with them.

Rather than choose one, this family attempts to incorporate many religions. More specifically, the father is leading the responsibility to maintain religious practice in the home and to teach his children. Inarguably, there is a gendered component to religion. Women prepare the food consumed on sacred occasions and they decorate or prepare the home for these occasions. In general, though, mothers and fathers were both active in shaping the family's religion. For some

families the father reported that he felt he was more pious and for other families the mother said that she was.

In general, my participants defined religiosity by the frequency of praying. From praying daily to only praying during a ritual, participants were likely to use the frequency of praying as a measure of the intensity of religion. For example, participants who reported that they did not really pray regularly in the home tended to identify as “not very religious.” However, all participants had a worship or specific space for rituals in the home. This site was either a closet set aside or a special corner of a room for the display of deities and other objects used in prayer and for rituals.

The majority of participants in my study identified as Hindu. Two fathers identified as Muslim, with one of them stating he practices many different religions. One father identified as Jain. All three non-Hindu men are married to Hindu women and in all three of these families, Hindu rituals were practiced. For example,

Interviewer: So you're Muslim, are there any holidays that you celebrate or are you mostly a Hindu household or –

Pooja: No, we're half.

Interviewer: So which holidays do you celebrate?

Prabhat: Well, I celebrate the fasting month, Ramadan. And I belong to the [Islamic sect] so we have our own holidays that we celebrate and I go to the mosque with them.

Interviewer: Will your son celebrate both?

Prabhat: Yeah, I'm starting to take him to the mosque now. So he's been going with me about once a month.

Interviewer: Oh, OK. And do you [mother] pray at home?

Pooja: I'm starting to teach him a little bit but the other day he asked me, “Mama, go to the mosque with us,” and I said, “Mama doesn't go to the mosque.”

So, I think it's going to start soon where he's going to wonder why Mama doesn't go, you know? So I've been teaching [him] that Mama prays to Krishna and this is Krishna and this is how you pray to Krishna.

Interviewer: Was this a discussion that you had also about how you would handle...

Pooja: Yeah, we discussed everything when we got married.

Interviewer: And do you both consider yourselves religious?

Prabhat: Spiritual.

Pooja: We're very spiritual.

Prabhat: Religious, I mean practicing wise maybe not.
Yeah, but certainly we have a belief in God and we will pass that on to our son.

This was the only couple in which the parents identified as different religions yet wanted both religions to be present in the family. They found common ground in the spiritual aspect of religion rather than in any specific shared doctrine. When both parents were Hindu, they also described their religious beliefs as spiritual. However, parents frequently engaged in the ritualistic part of Hinduism, connecting to the cultural aspect of the religion. In this way, religion becomes an important conduit of Indian culture (Min 2010).

Indian Americans tend to conflate Hinduism and ethnic identity (Kurien 2004; Min 2010). Because so much of the family's culture can be conveyed through religion, it is not surprising that being Hindu and being Indian are often considered the same identity. I found that, as parents, the second-generation Indian Americans continue to use religion to shape an ethnic identity for third-generation children.

HINDUISM AS A WAY TO TEACH CULTURE

Hinduism in India is steeped in rituals that are performed daily as well as on special occasions. The first-generation parents tends to “go through the motions,” while the second-generation children demand to understand the meaning behind the actions (Min 2010). Every Puja has specific actions that can vary across caste, Indian state, and family. Although there are commonalities in the content of each Puja, each family and ancestral Indian state can have slight variations on how the Puja should be conducted. “Going through the motions” refers to such behaviors as repeating sacred chants or placing haldi (turmeric) on the forehead of a person or picture of a deity. The second-generation Indian Americans prefer to understand the meaning behind these types of actions. The participants in my study reported similar thoughts about rituals. Consequently, “Sunday schools” for Hindus have emerged across the United States. These schools, led by Hindu priests or swamis, teach the history and philosophy of Hinduism. When a sizable number of Indians gather in a city, Hindus begin to plan a temple (Khandelwal 2002). Visitors returning from India bring religious paraphernalia, including books and articles for Pujas (p. 87). Temples built in the United States are more than sites of worship; they are cultural centers for co-ethnics to gather and reaffirm heritage. More importantly, temples serve as social sites to teach children Indian culture.

Participants frequently reported that, as children, they performed rituals as directed by first-generation mothers. However, their mothers rarely explained why they performed the ritual or the meaning behind the different actions. First-generation fathers were more likely than their wives to possess deeper understanding of the rituals as well as a historical view of Hinduism. Perhaps this is the reason for participants reporting that religion was one of the few topics they discuss with their fathers.

As parents, the second-generation have limited resources to learn the basis of the religion. Is Hinduism a particular philosophy (spiritual) or is it comprised of rituals and daily prayers (practice)?

Mansi: My mom does all these Pujas and everything, and we just played along. Hey, okay fine, we'll say these chants, we'll eat the food. But one day it was really funny, this was after I got married, it's kind of early stages of our marriage – we were asking, "Oh, so what is Navratri about? What is the significance?" And my mom just like giggles and, "I don't know!" And we're like, okay. And then the next time we saw her she made it a point to find out, and tell us about it.

Interviewer: Well, that's nice though.

Mansi: Oh, well, maybe. I think for my mom too, she came here, [and] her mother, my grandmother, was very, very orthodox and did all the things [rituals]. And so she was trying to continue that. Probably every generation gets a little diluted. She's probably doing it because, "Hey, my mom's doing it, and this is what I grew up with, so that's what I'm gonna do." I don't know. I didn't think she, in particular, really found out what is the meaning of this? What is the significance?

This excerpt illustrates how religiosity varies from the first- to second-generation. Performing the rituals is embedded in Mansi's mother's daily life, though she still does not know what the parts of the ritual mean. Modern Hinduism is rooted in the ritual rather than an abstract philosophical teaching. For many of the second-generation Indian Americans, "going through the motions" without explanation is unacceptable. Interestingly, they are not rejecting the performance of the ritual; they want to understand what they are doing. Oftentimes, discussing Hinduism forged communication with parents.

Interviewer: Did they talk to you about Hinduism and explain --?

Charu: Yeah. Mostly, it was just kind of questions that I would have growing up and so they would try to explain. A lot of it stems from just tradition. So for me, I'm the type of person who doesn't take [it on face value]. If something is being done, I need to know the reasons why it's being done. An answer, like, "it's just tradition," or "it's the way it's been," that

doesn't fit well with me. So, I really need to know the reasons why we're [doing it]. As you probably know, there are certain things that are just lost in translation and have been that way. From a traditional standpoint, it's been locked in the tradition even though the actual meaning at one point in time, made sense.

Interviewer: Well, would both your parents – were they equally patient in answering your questions or did you go to one more than the other?

Charu: Yeah. My dad was able to give me probably a little bit more of a scientific reason behind things. And if he didn't know, he would ask my mom. But they pretty much both would answer a question.

Interestingly, Charu makes sense of the religious tradition by referring to the explanation as the “scientific reason” behind rituals. Rituals not only have a religious significance, but a secular one as well. Because Pujas represent such a significant aspect of Indian culture, its as if they are more in the secular domain than sacred. By learning the historical roots behind the actions, Charu is learning about culture. Perhaps this is why she conflated religion with science; Charu is learning about her cultural past, not so much about enhancing her spirituality.

Raised in the United States, the second-generation are socialized to a Western religious vocabulary. Joshi (2006) explains that Christian tenets in manners of practice and worship, such as kneeling, holding hands in prayer, congregational worship, and social and legal recognition of Christian holidays, affect the second-generation in two basic ways.

First, this generation cannot avoid absorbing Western sentiments concerning religion. For example, all but one family celebrated Christmas. Three families did not celebrate Christmas as children, but do celebrate for their third-generation children. “Not the religious part,” was a common caveat, though the reason for Christmas is the recognition of the birth of Jesus and, more importantly, the existence of Jesus. Christmas was by far the largest and most important

celebration in the family. No other Hindu holiday was reported as observed on a similar scale (as discussed in chapter 8).

Second, the vocabulary is different for Hinduism and Western religions. As mentioned, non-Indian inquiries about Hinduism reinforce a version of “American Hinduism.” Beyond asking how often they go to temple, basic questions non-Indians may ask about the foundation of Hinduism demand that second-generation Indian Americans demonstrate a little understanding of their religion. Playing cultural ambassador is not difficult for questions about food, clothing, or marriage. However, questions about the intricacies of Hinduism pose a problem. As Joshi (2006) states, “Indians from India ‘just believe’ in their religions, while Indians raised in America seem to want to know why to believe it” (p. 27). Consequently, about half of the participants reported that they would like to send third-generation children to Hindu classes in the future or were currently sending them to classes. Amira and Anish explain their involvement with Hindu Sunday school.

Amira: We started going to the Ashram. The Swamiji is American, and he basically just teaches children about Hinduism and all that.

Anish: Yeah, he went to India and was under somebody’s teachings or whatever, so he’s very good.

Amira: And it’s good that he can communicate well with the kids. Like understanding him is much easier versus some other Swami.

Interviewer: You said they [children] like it?

Anish: Yeah. He has a very clever way of reaching the kids to talk about the old rishis and how it was, and things like that.

Interviewer: How often is this?

Anish: This happens every other week. We don’t attend it religiously.

It's in a lecture format. And he'll tell you, "quiet kids, we're not in the kiddie session now. We're in the teenager session, so you have to listen. You have to participate." It's going to be like a college format. So it's very nice.

Amira: Yeah. He chooses a topic and then he talks on it.

Anish: And he has slides.

Amira: The dos and don'ts of Hinduism. Things like that.

Interviewer: Do you talk to the kids afterwards about it?

Anish: Sometimes, definitely.

Amira: Yeah, sometimes we discuss. And then he also has a debate after that, 15 minute debate.

Anish: About karma and things like that.

Amira: And he'll be like what do you think? Kids will say, "oh my parents say this, but you're saying something else. "

Anish: Its very nice. Very good.

Amira said that she prays almost every day and reported that she considers herself to be fairly religious. Anish said that he did not consider himself religious. Regardless of their religiosity, the structured Hindu classes for their third-generation children are very important. The burden of explaining the complexities of Hinduism has been transferred to someone else. Moreover, the parents believe that this swami is an expert. Amira and Anish described his qualifications by his background (he went to India to study,) and structured format. His academic approach further illustrates departure from his first-generation parents' "going through the motions." Through Hindu classes for third-generation children, parents are striving to teach the religion in a credible manner. The other half of Hindu parents intend to rely on their parents as well as forms of instruction, such as books and DVDs.

- Interviewer: Do you think teaching your son about Hinduism, is that important to you?
- Jyoti: Yeah.
- Jay: Yeah.
- Interviewer: How do you think you'll do that?
- Jyoti: Ask my parents.
- Jay: I don't know. Yeah, I think it's going to be a little bit of everything. I think it's going to be the grandparents. I think it's going to be you know the...
- Jyoti: Maybe through books. We'll have these cartoon DVDs about Krishna and Ganesh.
- Jay: Yeah, well we have DVD's.

As mentioned, Hinduism does not have centralized texts or deities. These commercial forms of instruction package a generic form of Hinduism. However, it is providing a succinct explanation to mainstream American culture. Whether it is through a "qualified" religious leader or other sources, second-generation Indian Americans are not relying on their own knowledge of Hinduism to teach their children. Aside from teaching their children, the complexities of Hinduism may make it difficult the second-generation parents to perform the rituals in the home.

- Interviewer: So you learned by example, by watching her [mother] and you can do what she did.

- Mansi: I cannot do exactly what she did right now. I cannot. Because I don't know what I'm doing.

Actually now they have things to make it easier. The Pujas on tape. And she actually used that. It's funny because you know when you do a Puja, you're like, "Okay," it says, "Okay, at this time, put the haldi over the Ganesha." And then they chant some chants. And then they stop and say, "Okay, at this time, pour some water on the flowers." This tape is telling you that, it's really neat.

In this instance, Mansi was not so concerned with the philosophical explanation, but merely the order of the actions. Demanding to understand the meanings did not imply that my participants would not perform the Pujas. There are many Pujas within Hinduism and how, when, and the deity vary by family and region. Without a centralized text for of worship, it is difficult to understand which Pujas to hold, when, and what happens during each one. Yet, parents desire to keep these traditions for their third-generation children. Much about Indian culture can be taught when a Puja takes place. The Puja involves socializing with other Indians as well as experiencing the food, language, and traditional clothing. Consequently, Hinduism provides an excellent channel to teach third-generation children a sense of “Indianness.”

HINDUISM AND ETHNIC IDENTITY

For Indian Americans, religion and ethnicity are intertwined. Even though religion goes through some mutations in the new country, Indian American immigrants tend to report that they become more pious than they ever were in their native country (Williams 2007). Religious groups construct social boundaries that become an integral marker of ethnic identity. Indian Americans use religion to form connections to other co-ethnics as well as with the mainstream society. Kurien (2004) also discussed that for Hindus, forming social groups based on religions is especially acceptable in the United States because it is not viewed as militant or anti-American. However, in Post-911 culture, Muslims and Sikhs must downplay religious organizations (Eck 2000; Williams 2007).

Indian Americans negotiate more than one identity. Depending on the context, an individual is Indian American, a resident of a native state in India, Hindu, and an American. Moving from one identity to another requires knowledge and acculturation to wide variety of

social contexts. Because there are few social options in the Indian diaspora for non-Hindus, such as Muslims and Christians, they sometimes lack the same sense of community. Moreover, Hindu identity is a “consolidation of identity” (Maira 2002:138). That is, religious identity, while politicized, is oftentimes offsets racism or prejudice. A non-Indian may associate an Indian American to an ancient Hindu civilization rather than a non-white or minority (p. 139). Marginalized and non-white status motivates people to connect with co-ethnics. Clearly, religion provides this connection. As one father said:

Interviewer: Do you see Hinduism as important?

Ramesh: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. I think it’s good to have a sense of identity, and so they can make informed choices when they get older, what they really believe in.

But right now, they just understand they’re Hindus. They go to a temple and they’re different. They know some of the gods and some of the beliefs about like reincarnation, but that’s about it. There’s no real deeper meaning of religion. I think they would probably know more about Christianity, just because of what they hear in school. [They know more about] Christmas and Easter and all that kind of stuff than they do about their own religion, which I would say is probably a shortfall.

For most of my participants, Hindu and Indian are almost synonymous. As Ramesh noted, his children “are different.” Parents feel the third-generation children need the connection to other co-ethnics and should be aware of the religious identity. Knowledge of Hinduism will eventually come, but for now, “they just understand they’re Hindus.” Ramesh’s wife shared his view. First, I asked her whether she considered herself religious.

Rena: I believe in things but I don’t exactly follow how lots of other people follow. I think I consider myself more spiritual probably.

Ramesh: Yeah, I mean I think there’s a God and I think there’s – I think what happened – I mean this is my own personal belief is that there’s something

out there that we can't explain and every – the different religions in the world just interpreting that thing differently, you know? But I do believe there is a greater being out there.

Interviewer: Do you raise the children as Hindu? Or any religion really?

Rena: I mean we do tell them that they are Hindus. They come across some questions and ask me and then I'll explain to them. I do take them to the [temple] once in a while, once a year or two. I have our own small temple here.

Despite not identifying as religious, she nonetheless wants her children to identify as Hindu. When she discussed her spirituality, Rena appears to assign Hinduism as more of an ethnic identity. She separated the two; she is more spiritual than religious, but again follows the rituals of Hinduism. It was not uncommon for parents to state they are spiritual, but that they participate in the community aspect of the religion. Stated so directly, it seems to almost make Hinduism synonymous with Indian. This conflation can be problematic for non-Hindus in the Indian diaspora. In general, statistics indicate 85 percent of Indians (in India,) identify as Hindu. Consequently, Hindus emerged as the dominant religion for this group in the United States as well. Typically, community events involve Hindu celebrations, but not other religious observances. When asked if she planned to raise her son as a Hindu, Rena replied, “Yeah, my culture is my religion also and so I want to pass that onto him. For me, it is a part of my culture, a very important part.”

The following excerpt Mohnish described his efforts to locate appropriate Hindu school environment for his sons. I asked him whether he relies on Hindu school to teach his sons about Hinduism.

Mohnish: Yeah. They had to kind of get something. So we took them to [cultural school] when they were in [city]. The thing was, when we were in [city], it was such an Indian community that they [children] were just kind of immersed there. And when they came over here, the next closest one [cultural center] was in downtown [city], which is like 20 miles away. So we were like, I don't want to drive 20 miles. For one year, we didn't do anything and that was combined with moving to this predominantly non-Indian neighborhood. I remember I was like, I didn't want them to not know who they are or to be ignorant of that. I think they felt the same way about, "Hey, this is what I'm supposed to be, but I don't know kind of any of the trivia, the knowledge, and everything that goes with that." First, there is a place, it's called the [name of cultural] Center. It's this place that's very close. I was like, "All right, let's Hindu it up." I went over there with the kids one Sunday and it was a very interesting sight. It was all of these Hindu religious teachings. We were the only Indian people there. Everyone else was white. People who had kind of adopted the religion and teachings. Not only that, but the facility where they did their service was basically something that used to be a church and, in fact, if you walked in, it looked like a church. There were benches and a pulpit and then the art ceiling and everything like that. And interestingly, everybody – they were singing hymns like you were in church, like it was church, except it was now something in Sanskrit and like that. It was surreal actually in a sense. It made sense because these were probably all people who grew up in churches, so that was a paradigm that kind of they knew.

Interviewer: Yes, kind of like a reinterpretation.

Mohnish: Yeah, exactly. But they found something in Hindu scripture or philosophy that they kind of resonated with. For Americans, it's a natural type of thing but nobody was speaking the native language or anything like that.

Interviewer: Did you continue there?

Mohnish: We went there once. It was too unfamiliar.

Interviewer: Did it seem to lack an authenticity?

Mohnish: It did. It did. I wanted kind of something for them and something on a regular basis. All right, this is what we do on Sunday mornings. You know, the text everything [Hinduism] is built around. We went over there, but here's the interesting question. So now we go to the [different cultural center]. I think that the majority of the parents there are first-generation parents who came from India, speak the native language, kind of all of that. I don't think there are many like us.

Mohnish, again, illustrated how parents value Hinduism and consider it an integral component ethnic identity. His narrative provides a nuanced view of the religious aspect. He does not simply want to teach his children about Hinduism, he wants to also connect to a community. From his account, it reads as though he is dissatisfied with both cultural centers.

Because the first center was all white people in a pseudo-church setting, it lacked cultural authenticity. Mohnish did not seem to mind that non-Indians had converted to Hinduism. His concern was that this center did not provide the appropriate community for his sons. Mohnish preferred his sons to share the experience with other third-generation children. Like himself, his sons shape an ethnic identity with their cohort. If Hinduism and ethnicity are conflated, then can a white person (read: Christian) convert to Hinduism? While anyone can practice Hinduism, a non-Indian will always be read as a religious convert. Scholars may research the tendency for Indian Americans to conflate ethnicity and religion, but mainstream society reinforces this tendency. In fact, mainstream Americans may assume that all Indian Americans are Hindu. Kurien (2004) reported that American Hindu leaders would like to transform Hinduism into more of global religion and separate it from its ethnic moorings in India. Additionally, Hindu organizations could offer support to Western converts. This movement would further Americanize, or institutionalize, Hinduism. It would also place Indian Americans on more solid ground in the multicultural landscape by mainstreaming the religion.

The second center Mohnish discussed was predominantly first-generation Indian Americans. This community is at a different stage of acculturation. In regards to teaching his children about ethnicity, he seeks a community that he can relate to. His unfinished sentence, “here’s the interesting question,” seemed to imply that perhaps Mohnish questioned whether he and his family fit in this first-generation Indian American community. Moreover, he concluded

with, “I don’t think there are many like us.” He was referring to being second-generation Indian American parents who are raising third-generation children. As an Indian American, it is not so easy to explicitly acknowledge the boundary that exists across immigration status. (I discuss how the Indian American community is arranged by immigration status in a later chapter.)

Nevertheless, the focus is not solely on teaching the doctrines of Hinduism. Perhaps he reluctantly admitted his lack of comfort with this center because he believes it should not matter if the members are mostly first-generation Indian American.

Joshi (2006) noted a language barrier may also motivate second-generation Indian Americans to seek religious communities of the same immigration status. Pujas conducted by a priest will be in Sanskrit or a “high dialect of an Indian regional language” (p. 67). Some second-generation adults may not be proficient enough in their ancestral language to understand the priest. Sanskrit is the ancient language of India. Because it is not used in casual conversation, most Indian Americans do not understand it. Nonetheless, the use of other ancestral language at Pujas provides one more way religion serves as a cultural learning experience for third-generation children (Joshi 2006).

CONCLUSION

Modes of dress, language, cuisine, calendar, gesture, art, and ritual communicate intricate messages an individual and a group transmits of itself (Williams 2007). This communication describes the linkage between identity and cultural objects. Religion can function as a useful conveyor of these cultural objects. For my predominantly Hindu participants, the religion shapes a sense of “being Indian.”

Multiculturalism demands a “public ethnic identity” (Kurien 2004: 365). Paradoxically, the mainstream American society demands that minority groups display their cultural differences thereby insidiously shaping “cultural authenticity.” Members are expected to participate, demonstrate knowledge, and pride about their culture. In the process, immigrants build social ties with co-ethnics through religion. These religious ties build a sense of nationalism, even for the second-generation (Kurien 2004). Gans (1979) described that an ethnic identity is less about maintaining the culture than it is about maintaining the identity. Members desire to maintain ties to the ethnic group and will express ethnicity in socially appropriate ways. To some extent, members have some agency as to “how and when to play ethnic roles” (p. 434).

As a critical component of ethnic identity, religion is primarily taught through “intergenerational transmission from natal households” (Williams 1988: 27). The task of teaching and maintaining Hinduism is not entirely gendered. Women are responsible for much of the home Puja activities, but in terms of teaching or finding a cultural center, fathers were as active as mothers. When directed to perform what seems like meaningless actions, the second-generation Indian Americans reject the ritualistic behavior of Hinduism. However, when the symbolism behind the actions is explained, they enjoy participating. More importantly, as parents, the second-generation believe it teaches their third-generation children about Indian ethnicity.

I was talking with a colleague, who is Jewish, about this theoretical issue. I wanted to understand the best way in which to communicate this relationship between religion, ethnicity, and the importance to the family culture. My colleague explained that in the Jewish family, the relationship of Judaism and ethnicity is similar. If an adult child converts to another religion, it is upsetting for the parents because it is considered not just leaving Judaism, but leaving the family.

While I do not have any similar accounts in my research or in other published work, I believe this would be similar parental response in the Indian American family. Because Hinduism is linked to the home and community, to leave or abandon the religion, is to leave the family. The religion serves as a way to transfer culture, thus to eliminate that link, is to create a divide in the family.

CHAPTER 6: INTENSIVE MOTHERING

For the most part, sixteen couples demonstrated traditional gender patterns for the division of household labor. Even couples who were more egalitarian reported gendered patterns falling along the lines of women performing slightly more domestic labor and childcare. Men were more likely to be primary wage earners and to perform outdoor activities such as yard and pool maintenance. Below are some responses to my questions about division of household labor.

Interviewer: Who does most of the cooking?

Bindu: I do.

Bimal: Oh, she does all the cooking.

Bindu: I usually do cleaning, everything around the house. Now I've hired a cleaning lady for at least five months, so those things I don't have to do.

The mothers not only did most of the housework, but at times described the arrangement with phrases such as, "I do everything," or "I do it all."

Interviewer: So today you both work. Who does what? How do you divide what you do around the house? Who does the cooking?

Amira: Oh god. Don't get him to start that. I do everything. He does nothing. Only thing he does is take care of the pool in summer.

Interviewer: You work on the pool.

Anish: I work on the pool, yeah.

Interviewer: And laundry?

Amira: I do everything.

Interviewer: Can you cook?

Anish: Not much.

Interviewer: Do the dishes?

- Anish: I wash the dishes.
- Amira: When, once a month?
- Anish: No, I washed the dishes before Cindy got here. Come on.
- Amira: OK. Just because Cindy was coming here.

Consider Heera and Hiresh's exchange. Both of them work full-time jobs.

- Interviewer: [In] the evening, who [cooks] dinner? Getting the dinner [ready] and taking care of their homework or activities?
- Heera: The homework's always me. Activities pretty much is me. Am I saying anything wrong?
- Hiresh: No, not at all.
- Heera: So that's pretty much me. Getting them to bed is also me.
- Interviewer: Bathing and –
- Heera: Bathing is usually [the Nanny]. When he would come from school, she would get him ready but if it was going to be one of us, it would be me.
- Interviewer: Well, what do you do, Hiresh? In terms of like –
- Hiresh: I do nothing.

The mothers claimed the majority of household labor and the fathers did not tend to object to this account. All but four families had either a “cleaning woman,” a nanny, or a parent (usually the father's mother) to assist with some aspect of the household labor and childcare. Thus, persistently defining household labor as women's work.

The gendered patterns that my participants demonstrated are consistent with much existing research on the division of labor in two-parent households. However, I believe there is another aspect to this story. Further examination reveals that embedded within typical division of

household labor and childcare is cultural maintenance within the family. That is, my participants were also communicating cultural patterns within their families. Their discussions of family culture demonstrated the intersection between culture and gender -- or more specifically, culture and motherhood. Examining gender patterns in second-generation Indian American families reveals the complex relationship between mothering and cultural production and reproduction. It is women who are the “cultural custodians” (Kurien 2003: 166). Mothers not only maintain cultural experiences within the family, but do most of the teaching to children as well (Das Dasgupta, Dasgupta 1996). Second-generation children have “inherited a collection of experiences” (Joshi 2004: 36). As parents, they negotiate components of identity and maintain some cultural experiences and discard others. These negotiations are quite complex and not carried out in a social vacuum, but are influenced strongly by parents, community, and society (Joshi 2004). For example, food, clothing, language, music, and religion are strong components of ethnic identity (Purkayastha 2005.) While not an exhaustive list, these cultural markers were consistent across all participants in my study. Mothers negotiate the quality of these markers (i.e. what kinds of food to be consumed and how often) as well as the importance of these markers in the family culture.

INTENSIVE MOTHERING

I draw on Hays’s (1998) concept of “intensive mothering” to explain the intersection of mothering and cultural maintenance within the family. To explore this intersection, I must first situate contemporary views on mothering within a historical context.

As an ideology, intensive mothering emerged during the industrialization of the United States economy. There was a societal shift in the expectations of fathers and mothers from in

colonial and much of pre-industrial America. While mothers were expected to tend to the physical needs (feeding, bathing, or clothing) of infants and young children, fathers were the responsible for the moral, religious, and intellectual teaching. Women were considered too emotional or irrational for the childrearing tasks. However, as the country industrialized and men increasingly went off to work in factories and plants, cultural expectations shifted. Mothers were expected to stay at home and oversee the majority of childrearing activities. Few women could attain this ideal; many women of color and poor women had to join their husbands in the paid workforce. Fathers primary responsibility was that of economic provider. Not only did this shift occur; more importantly, motherhood became reified insofar as society assumes motherhood comes “naturally” to women.

The ideology of intensive mothering further developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Hays 1998: 29). During this time, the cultural shift intensified not only motherhood but also fatherhood. In this chapter, I discuss how motherhood changed and in the next chapter, I describe how fatherhood changed. As the economy transitioned from agriculture to industrialism, upper- and middle-class children shifted from being economically useful to an emotional asset (Zelizer 1985). In poor families, children continued to contribute to the family economy during industrialism. With this economic shift, the *cultural* view of children changed as well. They were less likely to be viewed as an “agent of sin” that needed to be sometimes physically shaped into god-fearing productive adults, but rather vulnerable innocents in need of protection (Hays 1998: 29). Moreover, childhood was cherished and prolonged. During industrialization, middle-class women were expected to take care of the home. Fathers remained the ultimate authority, but mothers “had a much larger and more valued role to play in shaping the child” (p. 32). This emotional investment in the child was culturally constructed as all-

consuming and labor-intensive. As men were expected to “go off to work” to earn the family wage, the cult of true womanhood emerged as the prevailing ideology of the day (Welter 1966). A “true” (white) woman was positioned in the home. She did not work in the paid workforce; her contribution to the family economy was to perform all housework, be an obedient wife, and most important, be completely devoted to the upbringing of the children. This cultural ideal reinforced gender inequality in the United States.

Although not all families could afford for the mother to stay at home, this ideology applied to all women regardless of employment status. While intensive mothering was pervasive in the United States, not all women could “mother” in the same way. There were clear class differences. Hays (1998) notes key differences across class in terms of resources and parenting approaches. More affluent families could afford higher quality of education, healthcare, clothing, activities, etc. In terms of parenting approaches, middle-class mothers tended to encourage autonomous, self-motivated, and ambitious children, in a rapidly industrializing economy, agency of the individual is highly valued. That is, “success” in adulthood is more contingent on the efforts of the individual. Conversely, working-class women were more likely to teach obedience to their children. As Hays (1998) explains, working-class children were more independent than their middle-class counterparts. With both parents in the paid workforce, they had less adult supervision, were more likely to enter the paid workforce at an earlier age than their middle-class counterparts, and had to perform more household chores. Obedience kept children tied to the family. Otherwise, the concern was that children would leave the family and enter wage labor for themselves.

During the late nineteenth century, parenting advice materials emerged with the intent on training mothers. The ideology of this time, in a sense, continued to view mothers as too

emotional and irrational. Thus, a mother's "natural" nurturing tendencies must be tempered to address the child's behavioral training (Hays 1998: 39). This era of parenting was characterized by "strict scheduling, regularity," and emotional toughness. That is, mothers were advised not to over indulge their children by picking them up too much, but rather, allow children to "cry it out" (p. 39). While children were less likely to be considered little demons, they were considered to be somewhat "wild" and parents were responsible for taming their wild impulses.

Around the 1930s, when developmental psychology became very popular, another nuance to parenting emerged in the United States. While highlighting the child in the family gained importance in the nineteenth century, this focus was to be in line with adult interests (Hays 1998: 47). This transformed during the Permissive Era where the child was likely to be the focal point of the family. In other words, "the natural development of the child and the fulfillment of children's desires are ends in themselves and should be the fundamental basis of child-rearing practices" (Hays 1998: 45).

This permissive approach to parenting persists into the post-industrial era. In the mid-twentieth century, Hays described how significant instructive parenting materials, such as childrearing books, became incorporated into responsible parenting. Written by so-called "experts," the materials provided a multitude of childrearing advice. Childrearing books authors and pediatricians expected mothers to heed this advice. The literature had an underlying assumption of middle-class status and mothers as primary caregivers. The general idea was for mothers to focus on emotional, behavioral, and cognitive development. Hays (1998) also analyzed several parenting books from the late twentieth century and found that, for the most part, the advice was aimed at mothers, not fathers. Not only were the experts shaping "intensive mothering" they were reinforcing the notion that women should be primary caregivers.

At the end of the interviews, I asked my participants if there were any topics that they wanted to comment on further. Deepa said, at this point:

Deepa: I think being a parent is the best thing I do. It's my favorite thing. It defines everything about you. For me, it's helped me understand my parents, his parents, especially with his parents. I just didn't get it for so long. I get it so much more now because you see the world differently. I think parents, no matter what your background is, there's that common experience of parenting that builds a common bond that now you can see it from the point of view of a parent. And even if you wouldn't quite make the choices they made, at least you can understand why maybe they would have done that [choice] because you're doing it for your child's best interest. And maybe misunderstood, maybe, is a piece of that. But parents do it because they think they're doing the right thing by their child, that's all.

Parenting is not only her salient identity; parenting has given her insight into her parents' motivations and her husband's parents' motivations as well. I found this speech noteworthy, not so much because mothering is her identity, but that she was stating that motherhood has encompassed her life. It is her strength, the most enjoyable part of her life, and it has given her incredible insight and maturity. She generalized it to women, or possibly parents, by using "I" pronoun then moved to the more general and distance "you." Thus, this can happen for anyone (any woman). Throughout the interviews, there were subtle ways in which women demonstrated intensive mothering.

I asked a father, Taresh if he found any stage of parenting more challenging than another. He actually mentioned the "mothering instinct."

Taresh: Each stage has its own challenge. I don't think it's, at any time, any intensity of parenting goes down. It's different ways. When they were little, Trisha had a skill of taking care of them and Trisha's mother instinct was more important. Even for just two, three days when [oldest child] was in the hospital and I had to stay with [youngest child], how I cut the sandwich with [youngest child], [youngest child], "Mom cuts this way."

Trisha: [Our oldest child] was hospitalized when he was nine and a half or ten. He was, as a child, asthmatic. Taresh had to stay home with [our youngest child], while I stayed in the hospital, and in the morning, Taresh was making her lunch, and he put the turkey on one slice of bread and the cheese on the other and that wasn't acceptable to her, because that's not how mom makes it.

Taresh referred to the "mothering instinct" as the more important parenting technique, at least during early childhood. At first, it seemed as though he reduced mothering to mundane tasks such as sandwich preparation. Perhaps, though, he illustrated that intensive mothering is so pervasive that "mom" touches all activities in the household, however small.

Intensive mothering was frequently subtle, but definitely reinforced by fathers. For example, I asked Satish and Sheela about the timeline concerning getting married and starting a family. Satish explained how they came to live in their current city:

Satish: It was a difficult decision for her because she actually quit that job so we could move down to [City], and I could take a job here. You know, my job here, when we talked about it, one, we wanted to start a family so we knew that would be. I think, two, is that job, even though as great as it was, geographically – it was regional. She couldn't have transferred to another...

Sheela: Right, right.

Satish: ...office. Also – I think if she could have had the job here in <City>, you know, that's something we talked about. But it was definitely her, walking away from, you know, a very good job there so we could establish a real household and start a family here.

Sheela: Yeah.

Interviewer: So you made the decision that you wouldn't work –

Sheela: Right, right.

Interviewer: Once you had children?

Sheela: Right, once we had children, and then even at that time that we were trying to get pregnant, you know, it just didn't make any sense to sign

something here [city] only to turn around and say, “You know what, I need to go on maternity leave.”

Satish: And, you know, that’s one thing, my mom – just to give you some background. My mother, she didn’t work until my youngest sister was probably in grade school. So that’s one thing we talked about, too, having a large family, and not to restrict her [Sheela]. Definitely the option is out there once our youngest child is in grade school. You know, if it makes sense for her to go back to, uh, work if she wants to, you know, that’s definitely in.

This couple believes that mothers are the obvious primary parents. A “real” household and family is one where mom stays at home. Satish did not discuss the possibility of being a stay-at-home father, nor did he mention co-parenting. Despite Sheela’s successful job that had actually supported them while he was finishing a graduate degree, he did not seek flexibility in his new employment to allow him to share in daily parenting responsibilities. By using the phrase, “if it makes sense,” he conveyed that Sheela’s future participation in the paid workforce might not actually be an option for this family.

The women generally expressed the participation in the paid workforce as a combination of career choice and economic necessity. Five women described their work status as the stay-home-parent. For the most part, men described their position as the primary wage earner. The concept of the “family wage” and the socially constructed image of father as head of household was expressed by nine of the men. In the United States, the family wage economy emerged in the late nineteenth century. The concept refers to paying a man a wage that will support his family and, more importantly, allow his wife to stay at home and take care of the children. Although no longer relevant in a post-industrial society, the ideology persists. The durability of the “family wage” is not only evident by examining the persistent wage gap between men and women, but by the fact that “stay-at-home mom” is more expected by society than “stay-at-home dad.”

The transition to parenthood was a common point where the “breadwinner” model emerged. In the following excerpt, Kashi and Kiran discussed the transition when their first child was born. This transition included the mother quitting her job in the paid workforce.

Interviewer: And what was that transition like, when she came along? How did things – did anything change in the house?

Kashi: It – it was like – like – like a blessing from the gods.

Kiran: Initially, you know, that it was wonderful. I mean this was something we were waiting for, something we wanted, and something, you know – it was great. For me it was, I think, a little bit difficult in the sense that all of a sudden, you know, you have to watch the baby and still go take a shower and cook and clean and you know and – and not leave her alone and be – I mean, I literally used to go to take showers while she would fall asleep or something, have the door open just run in and run out, because I was so afraid – oh, my God, if she gets up.

Kashi: When she came, I tell you, like it is the two, three happiest moments of my life.

I am happy and proud to be the one to be making- I’m happy that she didn’t have to work to maintain our lifestyle or quality of life. And she can devote her time to it [mothering]. But I understand it’s just as important as like taking care – if – if not more important, too, that she can take care of the kids like she is. And it’s my part [work]. And by luck, I make more than enough and so she doesn’t have to [work].

Kiran: That’s what we argued about. We had talked about it. But I knew, whenever I have kids, you know, my whole [life] is my kids. My kids have never yet – have ever been with a babysitter – ever, in their lives.

Kashi: No, not for a day.

The birth of their first child was a blessing and a joyous occasion for Kashi. Kiran was more practical in her account by discussing the realities of caring for an infant. Kashi considers his most important contribution to parenting is to allow Kiran to devote all of her time to taking care of the children. Moreover, Kiran also reinforced this image when she expressed pride in the fact

that no one outside the family has provided daycare. Again, there is a narrative concerning “mothering” as a central component of a woman’s life.

Not all women in the study were stay-at-home mothers. Thirteen of the women in the study returned to paid work after a period of maternity leave. Hays (1998) discusses the stay-at-home mom and the mom who works for pay as mired in an ideological battle. The mom in the paid workforce strives to be “supermom” (p. 132). She is strong, ambitious, and still capable of being primary caregiver. The stay-at-home mom is dedicated to the well-being and happiness of her family. She does, in fact, devote all of her time to mothering, as it is her primary “job.” Society frequently positions these two images as “at war” (p. 131). As cultural stereotypes, the mom in the paid workforce is too focused on her career and neglects her children, while the stay-at-home mom is devoid of identity, boring and lazy (p. 131). None of my participants discussed any negative aspects to being a stay-at-home mom. However, mothers who had full-time employment did discuss the challenges of meeting the demands of work and motherhood. Priyam has a full-time job and in the long excerpt below, she described her struggles with trying to be a “supermom.”

Interviewer: So, who has a more flexible work schedule?

Paresh: I do.

Interviewer: You do. So if something came up with the children if your son gets sick at daycare, would you be the one to go get him?

Priyam: Well, I would say flexible, my job is more flexible, even though I work longer hours. I have – I can work from home whenever I want to. I can not go in, in the morning, or work late, just because my hours are – just because I work a lot of hours, but I also do have the flexibility – more flexibility. So if there was something that does come up, I’m the person that sort of will drop – or has the ability to. Just because that’s the nature of my job; it’s more flexible. Where his is more structured around a certain day schedule. But I don’t think that – if there truly was an

emergency and I couldn't go, I know that he could. But those types of last minute situations, it's usually easier for me to make the adjustment.

Paresh: Yeah, we generally would with doctor's appointments-

Priyam: We schedule them later.

Paresh: It's hard for her to make it, so, no. Yeah, she has the flexibility, but it's rare. (laughter). So... –

Priyam: I wouldn't say that, because if we schedule a doctor's appointment at six evening, I work my schedule around it. Or if I need to go to the bank at nine in the morning, I work – I get up at seven, I log on. Work a couple of hours, I go to the bank.

Paresh: Yeah, but how often does that happen?

Priyam: But I can do it whenever it's needed.

Interviewer: Do you take your children to the doctor?

Paresh: Yeah. I mean – with my son, yeah.

Priyam: We both go, together.

Prashant: We try and schedule it at like 6:00, that way she can come. We try to schedule both kids at the same time for their vaccinations. And she's there about 50% of the time.

Priyam: I go every time. There's like twice I didn't go.

Prashant: I don't know. (laughter). I remember Mom coming with us a lot.

Priyam: Yeah, she wanted to come, but I think there's only twice that I can remember, I don't know. There's only twice that I can think of that I couldn't go. But...

Both parents claimed a flexible work schedule. An important responsibility of the nurturing mother is caring for sick children. Priyam was defensive and almost indignant at the suggestion that she was not present for her children's doctors' appointments. Mothers can internalize society's negative image of the full-time employed mother and defend their position as primary caregivers. Regardless of paid workforce status, all the women in my study presented a

“supermom” image. Hence, the mothers in my study frequently used phrases such as, “I do it all” or they expressed pride that they have never used a babysitter.

FAMILY CULTURE: MOTHERS AS CULTURAL KEEPERS AND TEACHERS

For immigrants in the United States, intensive mothering intersects with cultural maintenance. As with household labor, mothers play a significant part maintaining and teaching the family’s culture. I found this pattern continued among my second-generation parents. Throughout the interviews, participants referred to different cultural experiences and objects that highlighted intensive mothering. Participants explicitly described how they learned Indian culture from the mothers. The transfer of cultural knowledge often times occurred by doing or performing rituals when directed by first-generation mothers. As parents, second-generation mothers are also teaching their children in a similar fashion. Teej or Karva Chauth is one example of a cultural experience that is taught through demonstration. That is, children observe their mothers engaging in ritualistic fasting for the well-being of their husbands.

Teej or Karva Chauth, depending on the Indian state, is a tradition practiced by married women in many parts of India. Depending when the moon is full, Teej occurs in August and Karva Chauth in October. Married women fast for a day for the well-being of their husbands. Historically, women have very limited social and economic resources and are completely dependent on their husbands. Consequently, a woman’s well-being is greatly contingent on her husband staying healthy, and most importantly, alive. This tradition is still practiced by many first- and second-generation Indian Americans. Karva Chauth is generally fasting from sunrise to sunset. Teej is fasting from sunrise to sunrise but, can also be from sunrise to sunset. Women do not consume any sustenance, including water. However, because many women are in the paid

workforce, the fasting has been modified. Water and uncooked foods, but no dairy, may be considered acceptable while adhering to the tradition of fasting.

Although not entirely certain how many, I had the impression that most of the women in my study had observed fasting for their husbands at least once. Six of the women reported that they currently observe either Teej or Karva Chauth. In the excerpt below, one mother described how much family culture is learned through observation and how this method is teaching her third-generation child.

Mother: There's a lot of things that we do because that's the way we observed our parents doing it and it's not that we're necessarily teaching our kids, but they're learning it. Small example – two years ago, when I did Teej or was it last year or one of those two years – [daughter] called me from [university]. During Teej, she'll call me several times during the day. How are you doing, mom? Are you OK, and this and that? And towards the evening, I can barely talk because I don't even drink water, so she'll be like, "oh, my gosh, mom, when I do Teej, I don't know how I'll handle it." I never said, "[Daughter] you have to do Teej." I said, "well, [daughter], when you do Teej you're going to drink water, you're going to drink juice and eat fruit. Don't do it the way I do it because it's very, very hard." And she said, "No, no, I'll try."

Culture is not always explicitly explained or taught to children. In this excerpt, the third-generation daughter was learning from observation. Clearly, from this account, direct conversation concerning this cultural experience had also occurred. In the mother's narrative, her daughter intends to incorporate some aspect of this cultural experience in her married life. This excerpt is an explicit account of how cultural practice can be learned and repeated by the third-generation children. This was one of the few examples of this type because most third-generation children associated with my study were too young for their parents to have had this kind of exchange.

Clothing

In Indian culture, clothing strongly illustrates the intersection of mothering and culture. Traditional Indian clothing for women is far more symbolic than men's. Women wear saris or salwar kameez (long tunic and pants) to parties, weddings, and other auspicious events. Men occasionally wear Indian clothes to weddings, but all the fathers in my study reported that they usually did not wear traditional Indian clothing.

Heera: I love wearing like a lot of Indian outfits but I wear them to Indian functions. If I wear something to an American one, it's going to be a Westernized form of one, not one that looks traditionally Indian. I'm not going to wear a lengha [long skirt with matching blouse] to an American party. I'm going to wear, like, one that's got pants or something that looks more Western. If it's a dress, a lengha, it'll look like a dress or a skirt with a blouse. It won't look like that traditional one.

Indian immigrants are one of the few groups to continue to wear traditional clothing in the United States (Khandelwal 2002). Moreover, second-generation Indian Americans believe that wearing traditional Indian clothing is a large component in constructing an Indian identity in the United States (Maira 2002, Purkayastha 2005, and Sinha 2004). All of the women in my study reported they wore Indian clothing socially. For third-generation children, culture is reinforced when they see their mother wearing Indian clothing. However, second-generation women were more likely to express reluctance or refusal to wear Indian clothing outside of an Indian event. Mainly before puberty, boys sometimes wear traditional Indian clothes to auspicious occasions, but daughters almost always wear traditional Indian clothing.

Interviewer: Do they [two daughters] like to wear Indian clothes?

Vineeta: Yes.

Interviewer: They do?

Vineeta: Oh, they love to wear Indian clothes. Yeah, and all the jewelry and everything. They love it.

Vijay: Yeah. Jewelry's not a bad thing.

Vineeta: It's now, "what's going to match? Oh, what about this?"

They love doing all that. Yes.

From childhood, Indian clothing is taught as a component of ethnic identity and a gendered activity as well. Children are socialized to the image of women wearing Indian clothes.

Interestingly, the idea of traditional Indian clothing has been culturally shaped as very feminine.

At a young age, Indian American girls want to wear traditional clothing and jewelry. In contrast, traditional clothing for boys is optional; it is not presented as something masculine.

Food

Mealtime was also a strongly gendered activity. All families reported that they shared at least one meal a week that would be considered "Indian food." The kind of foods people eat defines them within a community as well as outside the social group. Cuisine shapes a specific "Nation" and "National" cultural script and is gendered-linked activity in the family (Narayan 1997:161). Feeding the family produces "home" and "family" (DeVault 1991:79). DeVault (1991) found that women planned meals around the tastes of family members. While mothers want to cook food that will be eaten enthusiastically, they are nonetheless making the selection for the family (p. 85). Women are drawing on a discourse of history about feeding the family as a media that reinforces meal preparation as a gendered task. Thus, the women in my study were not merely feeding the family, but maintaining culture with the choice in food. Consuming Indian food is an integral part of the first-generation Indian American family (Khandelwal 2002). I found Indian food has remained critical to motherhood in the second-generation families as well.

- Interviewer: Do you primarily prepare Indian food?
- Bindu: Yes.
- Bimal: I think when you cook, it's half and half.
- Bindu: No.
- Bimal: Because half the time it's Indian and half the time it's other things.
- Bindu: I do have spaghetti but it's mostly Indian. He loves Indian food and you know that's also the culture, right? The food is a very big aspect of the culture so you know he sees me cooking. Like special events or festivals, you do special types of cooking so that's what you're passing, right? So I think it's very important that I do more of that.

Bindu explicitly stated the cultural linkage to food. Most often Indian cuisine was stated as a preference. Frequently, parents stated third-generation did not want Indian food every day.

- Interviewer: And you cook Indian food?
- Amira: Yeah. (laughter)
- Anish: She cooks American food too, though.
- Amira: Yeah, but I would say four or five days at least it's Indian food, which they don't like that much every day. They have no choice.
- Anish: Too spicy or this and that.

The cuisine of the household is mixed. Participants categorized food as Indian or American. Pasta was the most popular non-Indian dish. Interestingly, I asked Trisha and Taresh if they thought Indian food was important to the family culture.

- Trisha: We all like it, and I think – I grew up with Indian food, so you get used to it. Even if, like I said, maybe during the week, once or twice I'll make, we might barbecue or I'll make pasta or something, but I guess since we're so used to it and the kids love it, that if we don't eat Indian food for a day or two or two days straight, we start [missing it.]

- Taresh: Very simply, one time we went to Florida for about ten days. And we ate everyday American food. On the way back, we came back 1:00 or maybe 2:00 in the morning, and I told my mother, leave the food – make enough food, leave on the table –
- Trisha: Chicken, curry and rice.
- Taresh: Don't put that in the fridge. And 2:00 in the morning, we all sat and ate. So, yes, Indian food, definitely after five, six days, you start missing it. Can't go without that.
- Interviewer: Just because it's what you like? Do you see it as part of creating culture or it's just what you like?
- Trisha: It's what it is.
- Taresh: It's a taste.
- Trisha: That, too, honey. There's so many regional dishes that you like that I don't like and I don't know how to cook, and you long for that.
- Taresh: It's taste. It's just taste. That's what you grew up with, that's what you like it. I eat certain things here, which most of my colleagues in the office don't eat because I grew up with that. It's just taste. I don't have any strong belief about it.
- Trisha: It's cultural, too.
- Taresh: You are acquainted to that. You know that [culture.]

While it may be “a taste,” it nonetheless represents Indian culture to their third-generation children. First-generation families were more likely to have home-cooked meals, whereas, second-generation parents are part of the thriving restaurant culture in the United States. When eating out, Indian food is less likely to be chosen. For Indian Americans, Indian food remains linked to family culture. However, this connection between family and the culture was frequently expressed as something inexplicable. That is, my participants have internalized

practices (i.e., eating Indian food) that create the habitus, but in turn “make sense” of Indian culture.

Jyoti: He thinks food tastes better when I cook it.

Jay: Well, yeah.

Interviewer: Is Indian food important to you as a family?

Jay: Yes.

Jyoti: Yeah I mean when we get together with our families - when I lived at home it's not like I don't like it or eat it. I would eat it every night when my mom cooked it. Um – Indian food, it takes a lot of time to prepare, which I just don't have and then on the weekends when I do have time I really am not in the mood for Indian. I'd rather make enchiladas or lasagna.

Jay: I love Indian food. If I go to my parents' house I want to eat Indian food.

Jyoti: He would probably want me to make it more but I don't.

Interviewer: How about as far as your son? Is it important that –

Jyoti: He's been – the nanny makes, him, um –

Jay: Like dals [yellow lentil curry.]

Jyoti: – Indian like food for dinner.

Interviewer: If she made enchiladas would you care or do you – I mean –

Jyoti: Well that's one of the reasons why we found a Gujarati nanny so she would speak to him in Gujarati and she would cook Indian food.

Jay: We're trying to keep everything Indian-based.

Preparing Indian food is time consuming. Jyoti is employed full-time and finds it difficult to find the time to prepare Indian food. However, both sets of grandmothers live nearby. They

can have a home cooked Indian meal fairly often. I imagine they eat the nanny's leftovers as well. In turn, the nanny is another Indian cultural conveyor. Only one father in my study reported that he prepared Indian food. In fact, he said, "what I cook about 90 percent of the time, is Indian food." He was also the only father to report that he does the majority of all meal preparations. Otherwise, though, women were most likely to prepare the family's meals. In families where the father did prepare at least some of the meals, these contributions were always non-Indian foods, such as pasta dishes. The mothers were overwhelmingly the parent most likely to prepare Indian food for the family. This tendency was reinforced by their first-generation mothers also preparing Indian food and, for a few families, the nanny as well.

Language

While first-generation Indian Americans differ from other Asian immigrants in that they have strong knowledge of English, language is intricately linked to "nation and community" (Khandelwal 2002: 46, Maira 2002: 145). In fact, Maira (2002) found that the second-generation participants in her study were eager to learn and retain their parents' ancestral language. Dhingra(2007) noted that sharing an ancestral language was one reason his participants stated they wanted to marry within their culture.

Shared ways of speaking are basic to the formation of social relationships, and to individual access to social networks and to participation in social activities (Dhingra 2007:187). Moreover, shared ways of speaking become symbolic of shared background knowledge, of shared culture. Thus, through language, culture is symbolically defined and maintained. "Do you speak the language?" becomes very relevant within the Indian American community.

It is common for second-generation Indian Americans to completely understand their ancestral language, but to not be able to speak it very well. Three participants reported they understood their parents' native tongue, but could not actually speak the language. However, all but one couple reported that it was important for their third-generation children to understand their ancestral language. And, more importantly, with the exception of one mother, it was the mothers who reported that they were the ones most likely to speak to their children in the ancestral language. Fathers were more likely to speak to third-generation children in English.

Interviewer: Do you speak Hindi to your children?

Mother: I started speaking Hindi to [oldest son] and when [oldest son] started speaking English, I started speaking English to him. Very strange. I speak only Hindi to [youngest son].

Father: I speak both, depending on what –

Mother: You speak more English actually.

Interviewer: To the children?

Father: Yeah, to the children.

Mother: You speak more English.

Father: Yeah, I guess you would say that. Yeah, more English.

What was noteworthy about this couple, is that the father is first-generation Indian American and the mother is second-generation.

Interviewer: Oh, OK. So you both speak Hindi, yes?

Bindu: Yes. Yes. I mean he [father] speaks and he can understand. He doesn't speak very flawless but he can speak it.

Interviewer: Do you speak Hindi to each other?

- Bimal: Yeah. Yeah, we don't speak English with each other.
- Interviewer: Do you speak only Hindi to him [son]?
- Bindu: Yes.
- Interviewer: And do you do a mix? Do you speak Hindi or also English?
- Bimal: I think I speak probably more English with him than –
- Bindu: Because you know since he started going to daycare and he's all the time speaking in English.
- Interviewer: He's picking it up.
- Bindu: Yes. He picks up because he's there all the time with them.
- Interviewer: So it's important that he know [Hindi]?
- Bimal: Yeah, so I want to make him speak Hindi as well.

If one spouse is first-generation, it was common for couples to report that they would speak at least a little of the ancestral language to each other. However, for second-generation couples, the ancestral language was not necessarily fluent conversation, but more likely to be scattered nouns or expressions. For example, second-generation couples would use ancestral language for Indian foods or the expression “go to sleep,” to children. Two couples reported that they would speak to each other in the ancestral language when they did not want their young children to understand what they were discussing with each other. All couples reported that when they traveled to India, they either spoke the ancestral language or made strong efforts to do so. When parents use the ancestral language with each other, it reinforces language as a component of Indian identity. In most accounts, regardless of immigration status, the mothers took the lead in discussing language.

- Amira: I speak Hindi. We both speak –
- Anish: It's mixed.
- Amira: I would say mixed.
- Interviewer: Are you fluent in Hindi?
- Anish: Not as – well, fluent enough, I should say.
- Amira: I would say now he is much better.
- Interviewer: Do you speak Hindi to each other?
- Amira: Yeah.
- Interviewer: And then you speak to the kids –
- Amira: They speak – when I say something, so I'll speak, but they'll never respond in Hindi.
- Interviewer: Never?
- Amira: I don't know why.
- Interviewer: They understand –
- Anish: Yeah.
- Amira: Yeah. They watch all Hindi movies.
- Interviewer: Could they speak, or do they refuse to speak?
- Amira: They refuse to speak, because they think they'll mess up. And they're scared that – they don't want people laughing.
- Interviewer: Do you think that's important to you, that they know Hindi?
- Amira: Yeah, definitely.

Interestingly, as parents, second-generation Indian Americans make an effort to retain ancestral language within the family, but frequently their third-generation children follow their pattern. That is, they completely understand it, but may not be able to speak fluent conversation.

Interviewer: What one do you speak to each other?

Vineeta: I speak to him in Gujarati, he answers me back in English.

Vijay: In English.

Interviewer: Is it important that your girls know Gujarati?

Vineeta: They did at one point. They don't speak it at all right now but they understand everything.

Interviewer: Do you speak to them in Gujarati?

Vineeta: Yeah.

Vijay: Yeah, my mother does too.

For the most part, couples' parents were from the same Indian state. A few had families from different Indian states, but still spoke Hindi. Hindi is generally considered the national language of India. Each state in India may have at least one distinct language and many dialects. Three couples were from different Indian states, (with different ancestral languages) from other. In all three instances, the children were taught the mother's ancestral language or more specifically, of the two parents, the mother was more likely to make the consistent effort to teach the children her ancestral language.

Interviewer: So what language do you speak?

Father: Hindi, Urdu.

Interviewer: Oh, can you speak Urdu? I know they're very similar.

Father: Yeah.

Mother: They're very similar but there are some words that I don't understand.

Father: And I don't either and you know, because I have been here so

long so – I mean we still speak it, I speak like with a mixture of both I think is probably –

Interviewer: Do you speak Hindi with your parents?

Mother: Very rarely.

Interviewer: Do you speak either language to your son?

Mother: We started initially when he was a baby, for us to speak in Hindi but you know his speech came really late and so our pediatrician recommended that we don't speak it to him right now. So we just stick to one language, English, and now it's just English.

Interviewer: Well, what do you think about that? Would you like for your son to know Hindi or is that important? Not important?

Mother: Yeah, I think it would be nice. Yeah, it's important. Yeah. I think it would be nice if he knew.

Although this father understands Hindi, Urdu is the language that he spoke growing up. For this couple, if the son learns a second language, it will be the mother's ancestral language.

Moreover, the mother expressed her wish for her son to learn Hindi. While it is important to learn the ancestral language, using the word "nice," conveys that she does not consider her son maintaining Indian culture as a foregone conclusion. Third-generation children may learn the ancestral language, but they may not maintain the language into adulthood.

CONCLUSION

In Douglas and Michaels (2004) discussion of the idealization of motherhood, women are not only primary caregivers, but also "supermoms" who dedicate their entire lives to the well-being of their children. In essence, no woman is complete or fulfilled unless she has children (Douglas and Michaels 2004: 4). Despite an enormous increase in the number of women with children in the paid workforce from 1950 to today, "intensive mothering" has simply picked up momentum. The "new momism" is characterized by choice. Women might work outside the

home or choose to be stay-at-home moms. However, “new momism” represents contradictory images of womanhood by incorporating mothering and professionalism in a ways that “both draws from and repudiates feminism” (Douglas and Michaels 2004: 5). Mothers are expected be overly ambitious in their endeavors to discover new and better ways to enrich their children’s lives. No longer can mothers allow children to walk to school by themselves or send them outside because they are a bother (Douglas and Michaels 2004: 5). In fact, Douglas and Michaels (2004) describe how “mothers as experts” includes dietary knowledge concerning proper organic foods and herbal remedies (p. 8). The conflation of caring and mothering suggests that caring comes naturally for women (DeVault 1991: 239). And, that caring is evidence of “love.” Thus, intensive mothering “produces compelling social pressure to do the work” (p. 239).

For the most part, the participants in my study described the gendered patterns of the division of household labor in their homes in very similar ways to existing studies on the division of labor. In regards to housework, I found no new narrative amongst the second-generation Indian Americans. Many of the men, though, were engaged in active childcare, such as taking children to doctor’s appointments and waking them up in the morning and getting them ready for school. Thus, there was another layer to understanding “women’s work.” Interwoven within the arrangement of domestic labor is the maintenance of the family culture.

Exploring mothering in the second-generation family revealed the complex intersection of culture and gender. Second-generation mothers are caught between their mother’s India and the U.S. culture that they were socialized to. Western scholars tend to view Indian femininity through an ethnocentric lens of autonomy. That is, Indian women need to be freed from the constraints of patriarchy. Western feminists should not assume that all Indian women are

dissatisfied with their position in the family. We cannot use Western gender constructs as a model to understand the experiences of all Indian women.

Women are the keepers of culture; a male-dominated “national culture” is demonstrated on the bodies of women. (Espiritu 2003). Women are the mothers; their virtuous and pious demeanor is expected to uphold the family’s honor. Western hegemonic discourse shapes Indian womanhood as a “Third world” woman oppressed, subordinate, forced into arranged marriages, dowry deaths, and other cultural atrocities. However, Indian Americans resist such images and reclaim power by producing an image of Indian womanhood that they feel is morally superior to that of the dominant group (Espiritu 2003; Kurien 2003). This image of Indian American womanhood does not engage in premarital sex and always respects her elders.

Western culture lacks values and morals that the Indian American family, or more specifically, the Indian American daughter embodies. The individualism of the West lacks appreciation for family in the way that Indian culture does. Much of “traditional” culture is steeped in gendered patterns. Food, clothing, and language are gendered activities. The remnants of this “traditional” mother were felt by my second-generation participants. Gender as an ideology is a set of social relations changing with context (Geok-lin Lim 2002). Thus, Geok-lin Lim 2002) uses the phrase “maternal gaze” to capture the complexities of “being born into one culture” while participating and observing the disappearance of the traditional (i.e. first-generation parents’) culture. Through the intersection of mothering and cultural maintenance, the women in my study position themselves to incorporate the “future,” but also bring their cultural history into raising third-generation Indian American children.

CHAPTER 7: ACTIVE FATHERING

As discussed in the previous chapter, mothers were largely responsible for teaching and maintaining some of the cultural objects in the family. Second-generation fathers were also engaged in shaping Indian culture in the family. Fathers were active in maintaining the family's religion as well as community ties. The fathers in my study also reported high levels of childcare. Four couples appeared to co-parent. By co-parent, I refer to the sharing of daily childcare activities where fathers were as likely as mothers to perform these childcare activities. For example, I asked Jay who gets up in the morning with their infant son during the week.

We alternate. Usually she likes to get up in the morning and I push her to get up in the morning because she doesn't see him in the evening at all because she doesn't get home until 8:00, 8:30. I put him to bed almost every night myself so I'm used to that. I'm used to seeing him and spending time with him. So even though she's tired I'm like, "Hon, why don't you get up?" Not because I don't want to, but just because I want her to spend – and she only spends like half an hour with him in the morning sometimes and that's it the whole day.

The notion of co-parenting involves shared engagement, accessibility, and responsibility (see Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, and Levine, 1985). *Engagement* refers to ongoing one-on-one parent-child interaction in activities such as homework, getting dressed for school, or playing a game. *Accessibility* means being available to interact with the child. The parent is home and nearby to interact with the child, if necessary. Last, *responsibility* refers to being involved in the day-to-day welfare and care for the child. That is, taking the child to a doctor appointment or to the store to purchase a new pair of shoes, and also mental labor of thinking what the child will need. Of these four couples, I do not know for certain if all areas were shared from the time the child was born to the time of the interview. I also do not have a robust account that probed every

aspect of family life. From the interviews, I have the perception that currently these four fathers did fairly high levels of childcare. In the individual interviews, the mothers corroborated the father's account. With two of these four couples, housework was reported to be equal. With the other three, either it was directly reported that they did not perform as much housework as their wives or I could ascertain the uneven split in housework through the analysis of the transcripts. Childcare, however, for all four couples appeared to have been equally shared. As for the remaining 14 couples, the fathers made uneven and inconsistent contributions to housework. Three of the families were more like the breadwinner model; fathers were the primary wage earners and did not contribute very much to housework or childcare. Ten of these 14 couples, fathers contributed fair amount of childcare, but, again, participants reported inconsistent contributions to housework. The concluding picture was that most of the fathers in my study are not doing household chores as much as the mothers, but are engaged in active parenting.

The purpose of my study is to provide a picture of how ethnicity is negotiated within the family. Fathering is a component of this picture, thus, the focus of my study is to explore how the fathers in my study negotiate parenting as second-generation Indian Americans. Are their fathers role models for them? How has the culture of fatherhood in the United States influenced their approach to fathering? Based on their narratives about their parents, I found that the fathers in my study do incorporate parenting styles from both of their parents. They have also "tweaked" their parents' parenting styles with their perception of American fatherhood.

To understand how the fathers in my study shaped their parenting style, I provide a brief overview of the culture of fatherhood in the United States as well as existing research on first-generation Indian American fathers.

BRIEF HISTORY OF AMERICAN FATHERHOOD

The Colonial Era

The broad changes that occurred in the family from the pre-Industrial era to the Industrial era mask nuances to the culture, and most likely conduct, of fathers. During the colonial era, families were engaged in farming. Because the site of economic production was the home, fathers were often present with their children on a daily basis. We still live in a patriarchal society, but the evidence indicates that the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were more patriarchal. In other words, during this time fathers were in charge of all household affairs and wives and children were likely viewed as men's property. Women would see to the physical needs of very young children, but fathers were primarily the parent to socialize older children for adulthood. Fathers were responsible for ensuring children "were learning their lessons, and fathers typically imparted religious instruction" (LaRossa 1997: 24).

The Industrial Era

During the nineteenth century, the economic base in the United States changed from agriculture to industrialism. The site of economic production was no longer the home, but away from home in a factory or textile plant. Fathers were no longer working in the home. Social change never occurs abruptly, but rather transforms culture and conduct over time. In other words, the United States did not shift to an industrialized economy in a year, but rather transitioned over many years. Consequently, the role of the father became increasingly associated with economic providing and women were associated with the "home place." This ideal only applied to upper- and middle-class families. For poor families and many minority families, the mother joined the father in the paid workforce for economic survival.

The Machine Age

As discussed in the previous chapter on mothering, the culture of parenting intensified in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Parents were not encouraged to rely on their own “good” judgment, but to heed the advice of doctors. Thus, the Machine Age, basically 1918 to 1941, was characterized by a scientific approach to childrearing. The early childcare manuals (pre-1920s) were aimed mostly at mothers. Fathers were mentioned very little. However, during the Machine Age, a modernization of fatherhood occurred (LaRossa 1997). The Machine Age was a time of incredible mechanized innovations and a cultural embrace of modernism in the United States. Taking place in the early twentieth century up to the Second World War, LaRossa (1997) discussed that this era as the point where the fusion of economic and cultural events created an enduring stereotype of what an American father should be (p. 1). This image of fatherhood stressed that fathers should not just be the primary wage earner, but also friend, playmate, and male role model (p. 39).

LaRossa (1997) analyzed different historical sources to explore the cultural changes in fatherhood as well as changes conduct. Early childcare books, such as *Infant Care* and *The Child*, presented varying images on the role of the father. For example, the former generally changed from ignoring fathers to incorporating men, at least to some extent, in infant care, while the latter shifted from being a very traditional text to one that was more modern (expanding the boundaries of fatherhood.) By early 1930s, along with the proliferation of childcare books, was the emergence of parenting courses and child study groups (LaRossa 1997: 89). Initially, when these types of classes were first established, very few fathers were reported to have attended. By the early 1930s, though, records indicate that there was a significant increase in the number of fathers attending these classes. Another example of the intensification of parenting was found in

the letters written to the U.S. Children's Bureau and to Angelo Patri, a high school principal and parent educator who wrote a syndicated newspaper column called *Our Children*. These letters provide a glimpse into the ways that parents were embracing modern approaches to parenting. While fathers did not write as many letters as mothers, they did in fact write letters seeking advice about various childcare concerns. These letters provide valuable insight into the conduct of fatherhood during the Machine Age. LaRossa (1997) does not contend that fathers were engaged in the same amount of childcare as mothers. He does state that some fathers were involved in very important childcare activities. To what extent fathers were involved is not entirely clear. The evidence indicates, however, that fathers were probably more involved than they are generally given credit for. The concluding picture is that the contemporary image of the "new nurturant" father actually emerged during this era of the early twentieth century. Thus, historically jumping from the pre-industrial father to the breadwinner father under industrialism ignores important cultural and structural changes to parenting that had a significant effect on fathering – not just mothering.

From The Machine Age To 1960

After World War II and up to 1960, the *culture* of fatherhood apparently regressed from earlier images to an image where fathers were more peripheral figures in the lives of their children (LaRossa 2007). However, the *conduct* is not so easily defined. Evidence suggests a contradictory perspective on the conduct of fatherhood. The stereotype of the fifties dad is that he did not provide much childcare, if any. On the other hand, there is evidence that fathers during this era may have provided more childcare than assumed (LaRossa 2007: 95).

Fatherhood In The Post-Industrial Era

In the post-industrial era, yet another image of fatherhood has emerged. Sometimes referred to as the “new nurturant” father (Lamb 1987), this image is characterized by being intimately involved in raising their children (LaRossa 1988: 454). Androgyny is encouraged more than before as, “real men” are involved with daily care giving tasks for their children. This “new” kind of father is supposed to be sensitive, emotional, and nurturing parent for his children. High paternal involvement is thought to be now the “yardstick by which ‘good fathers’ might be assessed” (Lamb 1987:6). Whether or not fathers actually interact with their children more than they did half a century earlier, Lamb (2000) states that father-child interaction is now defined as a central feature of being a “good father” (p. 27). Although the cultural ideal may have changed, the actual behavior may be lagging behind (LaRossa 1988). Moreover, LaRossa (1997) notes that this “new” father oftentimes, is considered the pioneer of dads— the first father to be so involved in childrearing. As previously discussed, however, this image of fatherhood as involved, playmate, and friend, actually emerged as long ago as the early twentieth century.

FIRST-GENERATION INDIAN AMERICAN DAD

The first-generation families that immigrated to the United States in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, tended to replicate the patriarchal model from India in that they held similar parental roles and family forms (Bhalla 2008, Khandelwal (2002). There exists a small amount of in-depth research on the first-generation Indian American family. Rather than focusing specifically on fathers, I found that much of the research focuses on parents. Perhaps this lack of specificity is due to the differing behaviors and perceptions between first-generation Indian Americans and non-Indian American families. In contrast to the individualist ideology of the United States,

India emphasizes the family or a collectivist ideology (Helwig and Helwig 1990). Family structure may consist of more than immediate family members to include extended family. For example, cousins are considered siblings and are addressed with the same titles as siblings.¹ Personal accomplishments reflect on the entire family because they not viewed as individual, but a “family endeavor” (Helwig and Helwig 1990: 84). As such, family members are inclusive of elders to the extent that they are respected and taken care of. Given the collectivist family, the focus of studies on first-generation Indian Americans would highlight the parents rather than the individual (i.e., fathers or mothers).

Through the literature that does exist, first-generation fathers have a common set of worries or concerns. First, these fathers are responsible for the well-being (economic, cultural, social, and physical,) of their families. These men are the first immigrants, not the women. Men initially came to the United States for better opportunities in education and business. They were either already married or after some time in the United States went back to India to get married. Regardless, most men came to the United States alone and established themselves before bringing their wives and possibility their children over. Consequently, they carried the burden of economic and professional success in this country. Secondly, fathers, just as mothers, were concerned that their second-generation children would “lose their culture.” Essentially, immigrant fathers wanted to ensure the well being of their children through a familiar cultural context (McAdoo 1993: 5). As first-generation fathers adapted to U.S. culture, they relied on morals, values, and judgments that they were socialized to in India.

¹ Elders are never referred to by their first names. Each dialect in India carries unique set of monikers for the particular family member and the assignment as either maternal or paternal line. These titles are used for older first-, second-, and maybe even third cousins.

There exists, however, a little more research on gendered patterns in the first-generation family. Through this examination of gendered patterns in the family, an image of the first-generation father emerges. Fathers see their role as mostly instrumental in that they are the primary wage earners. They do not consider housework in their domain (Bhalla 2008). Regardless of their paid workforce status, first-generation mothers were responsible for cooking, cleaning, and childcare. Bhalla (2008) analyzed letters written in the early 1990s to *India Abroad*, “the first newspaper of the expatriate Indian community in the United States” (p. 71). In these letters, many first-generation Indian American women complained about their husbands who, after coming home from work, would sit and watch their wives struggle to attend to the daily household tasks and children. Women, in contrast, had to be “super-women” (perhaps more aptly named super-moms). In India, families accepted an ideal of father as economic provider. But, in the United States, women lack the support from other female family members as well as servants that they might have had in India. Thus, first-generation mothers were not accustomed to performing all of the housework and childcare by themselves. Based on their gained economic power and their perception of more egalitarian gender patterns in the United States, they desired to rework a new gender ideology that included a “dual identity” as wives and workers, instead of the traditional image of an Indian woman as the good wife and mother (p. 90). There is not any research that indicates whether fathers supported or worked against these efforts first-generation Indian American mothers.

However, despite their own efforts, first-generation mothers raised daughters with ambiguous messages concerning gender. Mothers supported daughters’ educational attainment and career development, but also advocated getting married and starting family. In fact, they preferred that they achieved these life course events on track with their counterparts in the Indian

American community (Khandelwal 2002). Sons were raised to contribute a little more to the household chores than their fathers, but not as much as was expected from their sisters.

First-generation fathers felt they shouldered the burden for financial success in the United States. As discussed, household chores and childcare were primarily women's work, but fathers were engaged in parenting. They were also the family's teacher by tutoring in academics or the philosophy of religion. Participants in my thesis research as well as the participants in this study reported that there were specific topics discussed with their dads. The communication, from these accounts, was unidirectional in that fathers are disseminating information rather than cultivating an emotional dialogue with children. Fathers also closely monitored educational progress because they considered this an important aspect of fathering. They counseled and in some instances demanded a specific educational trajectory (university selection and major course of study,) as well as professional career choice. Additionally, fathers tended to stay very much involved in the matrimonial process of both sons and daughters.

FATHERING WITH A LESS RESTRICTIVE STYLE

Are the second-generation fathers in my study employing similar parenting styles as their fathers? As mentioned, they were as likely to reference their first-generation mothers' parenting as their first-generation fathers'. Analyzing the interviews revealed that first-generation fathers had influenced some aspect of their parenting style. Only one participant explicitly described how his father was his role model for parenting. When the fathers discussed their first-generation parents, their tone was commonly positive or just neutral (not positive, not resentful). One father was critical of the all the time his father was away from home due to his job. In general, when the fathers in my study discussed their childhood, if any negative characteristics were discussed,

they were reported in a neutral tone conveying that the participant had either had worked through the issue so that it no longer was troubling or it never was particularly troubling.

The fathers in my study did make references to the ways that their parenting is different from their fathers. Sometimes this comparison acknowledged the very different resources as well as social context.

Hitesh: That's a good question. Come to think of it, no, I haven't followed their guide. Not that their guidelines were wrong in anyway, just because those guidelines were in a different time in a different social economic setting, and in a different environment. So I don't think we can bring it here and apply it.

Interviewer: What kind of relationship did you have with your father before he passed away?

Hitesh: He was very caring. I loved him a lot. And just like any son is proud of his father, and he's his hero, that's mine.

Interviewer: So did you have good communication with your dad?

Hitesh: Yeah, I mean, the thing is, again, there is a cultural part of it. It's not like you come and say, "Hey, Dad, what's up?" You don't say that there. But you do talk, and they talk to you. And you bring up – kids ask questions, so I would bring questions, why this and why that. He was very patient in explaining.

Hitesh discussed difference in parenting very pragmatically. He recognized that he cannot use his father as a role model because of the different social context; nevertheless, he explained how much affection and respect he had for his father. Hitesh also noted the cultural difference in family communication. He illustrated through an example that the father-child dialogue is based more on teaching or guiding rather than an emotional status check. Prabhat also noted the differences in parenting across different social context.

- Prabhat: I always thought I was gonna be a good father, you know what I mean? And I wanted to spend more time with my child than my dad had an opportunity to do so. Their circumstances were much different. It was much tougher for them, you know, to bring us here and to make a living, and so I knew it would be easier for me. And I wanted to spend more time with my child than my dad had for me.
- Interviewer: How similar or dissimilar do you think you, as a parent, you are to your dad?
- Prabhat: I'm like my dad, but as a parent I'm different than my dad just because the circumstances are different. The surroundings are different. The economy's different, you know, our personal economies. I'm much more fortunate than he was, so I can probably do more than he did.
- Interviewer: Who do you consider yourself closer to – your mom or your dad?
- Prabhat: I think I'm probably closer to my mom, but I'm more like my dad.
- Interviewer: In what way? What do you mean when you say that?
- Prabhat: Well, he's more quiet and more reserved, so I think I'm like that.
- Interviewer: So growing up, when you had a problem, would you talk to your parents if there was something troubling you?
- Prabhat: Not really – no.

Prabhat referenced his father as a personal role model. His personality is more like his father, though he did not reference any specific parenting style. In the next excerpt, it is the mother who created a parenting strategy for her husband by explaining how he should be different from her father. Heera used her father as a role model for what not to do. The excerpt began with Hitesh explaining how he was beginning to interact with his son after recovering from an illness.

- Hitesh: I don't feel removed in any way. I think the association is still there. Actually, it's getting better with [our oldest son]. In other words, he never used to come and talk to me like he does now. So, in that way now, participation and activities is not that – physical activities, it's not that much.

Heera: No, but you can even sit and read with them. I mean obviously there are things that you can't do but, I don't mean it more to criticize you. I mean it more because I feel like I don't want them feeling what I felt from my father and I don't want them feeling that towards him and I don't think that's good for a relationship.

I want them [children] to feel like they can talk to us about stuff. That's the one thing where I felt like there was no communication. You have to do what we say or else type of thing. He's [son] very - he does do well. So I think that's why, but he'll probably still feel like there is pressure from us to do well. I'm sure. But, I just don't want it to be that restrictive upbringing that I had.

I mean it was because of cultural things. He would come home and do his thing and the only time he would focus on me was if it was something to do with like studying which drove me crazy. I remember the day I kind of revolted from it because you know, he would sit there and he would quote "tutor" me and I don't want it, you know what I mean? So, and then he would get upset if I didn't remember something. My mom remembers it more clearly. She's like, "he would sit with you a month later and expect you to remember stuff from a month ago and then he would throw a fit. He would throw paper and break pencils." My dad. He had a major temper and so one day I said, "you know, I don't want you doing this anymore." Then, he's like, "I'm not going to tutor you anymore." I'm like, fine. Good. And from that point, he never did. That was kind of like liberating. But, now my relationship with my dad is a lot better than it's ever been. I don't agree with my mom with many things whereas before I always used to think like her or agree with her. Now, I don't agree with her because she's very traditional with certain things and I'm not. My dad somehow now is turning out to be very liberal with things that he wasn't before. So it's changed, but that's what I'd like to see is that he [husband] spends more time with the kids.

Heera summarized much about the first-generation Indian American family. The points she made about restrictive environment and communication were patterns across all the parents in my study. The strict environment tended to be enforced by both parents. Fathers were not necessarily stricter than mothers. Usually, though, if one parent was a little less traditional (how participants explained it) then the mother was the one that was portrayed as more

flexible in parenting. A few participants noted that their fathers had a temper, as Heera did.

Initially, I asked Anish if he and his wife discussed parenting before they had children.

Anish: Before we had children? Probably not. I don't think anybody really does because they really don't know. You know? All they know is what their parents did, and if they're clever, they're saying this is what I would tweak when I have kids. Well most people don't even do that.

Interviewer: Did you?

Anish: Oh, yeah. Yeah, my father had an anger – really big anger, and I said I'm never going to be that angry. And I think at some level, you make observations and you try to tweak it, you know, when you're giving, and other things you realize, oh my god, I'm doing the same thing that my parents did.

Interviewer: How similar do you think your parenting is to your parents?

Anish: I'd say about 60 percent. It's pretty close, yeah.

Anish believed everyone inevitably uses their parents as role models, that that is the only available parenting resource. Participants would explain aspects of their parents' parenting that they might want to "tweak" or adjust, but in general participants did not appear to resent their parents or report that they were estranged from their parents. In fact, similar to Anish, participants did incorporate their parents' parenting styles.

Consider Satish's account. I began by asking about Satish's contributions to childcare.

Sheela: There are times like, you know, once in a while, if I have to go run an errand and stuff, Satish – I mean, right now with two of them, he does wonderful.

Satish: Oh, I also change diapers. Because I know there's a lot of Indian men that do not change diapers.

Sheela: Well – well, our fathers –

Satish: Our fathers – our fathers' generation, we haven't found anyone from age 45 or older that we've talked to that's change a diaper.

Sheela: Yeah.

Satish: And for me, I'll go in there. I'll change, you know, a messy diaper.

Diaper changing apparently represents the pinnacle of fatherhood “involvement.” Perhaps if a father had such a level of parenting intimacy with his child, surely he was “involved” in many other aspects of childrearing activities. Frequently, American dads believe that they are contributing more to fathering than their dads (LaRossa 1988). When he said, “our fathers’,” Satish made the comparison to Indian American fathers – not all American fathers. He believed he was contributing more to fathering than the first-generation Indian American fathers. Given the available research, Satish has accurately described that generation of fatherhood (Bhalla 2008, Ramu 1987). Regardless, the point here is that he *believes* his parenting is different- and an improvement- over his father’s parenting. Satish also described how he shaped fathering based on his family dynamics rather than specifically referencing his father as a role model.

We have joke, but I think there is some underlying tension in that when [our son] turns 16, he will have the ability to date. He will have the ability to manage his own time. That is he can go out on a Friday or Saturday night. The big thing about my parents is that they did not let me have a car. And I had all these activities, boy scouts, quiz bowl, vice-pres of the math honor society. I had all these roles, but I don’t think they wanted to lose the control. They wanted absolute control. Giving a car is a big degree of freedom for a kid. It was very uncomfortable my senior year when all of my close friends and probably a good 60 to 70 percent of high school could drive. And the other 30 percent at least had access to a car versus me. I was one of the few ones [who did not].

Academically, they [parents] were very good. We always had dinner. Only a few nights we would not have dinner together and that was an exception. Very good communication. We would sit around talking about the news, talk about what was going on in school. I don’t think I would say anything kind of personal. Because I didn’t date, there wasn’t anything [personal to discuss]. The other thing is that they-- which is going to be a different style

than my parents-- did not allow me to play any sports. I could do the boy scouts, I could do all the academic; I could not play a single sport. Actually, I was a very fast runner and I wanted to do track, but they would not allow it. They have allowed my sister who is 10 years younger to play soccer. So, they realize that was a mistake.

Satish did not resent his strict upbringing; he only wanted to make adjustments. His son will be allowed activities outside of academics studies. Wanting his sons to play a sport is not necessarily demonstration of hegemonic masculinity because he mentioned his sister was allowed to play soccer. Satish wants to provide more experiences for his children outside of academic achievements. For the participants who discussed the strict environment, academic performance was one reason for parental rules. First-generation parents structure the home environment to ensure academic excellence. For the most part, the parents in my study maintained this high expectation for academic excellence, but were more flexible in allowing, and encouraging, their children to participate in extracurricular activities.

Satish also alludes to the communication dynamic, though he does not seem to think that it was lacking in depth. In fact, he thought it was adequate based on his limited involvement in non-academic activities. Despite adjustments he will make to his parenting, overall he believes that his upbringing was positive because to some extent, he intends to replicate it.

I want to maintain the father figure. I don't want to be seen as overly strict, but I also don't want to lose that I am their father sort of thing. I'm not their pal, their friend. We can do a lot of things together, and I hope it's a very positive experience, but the relationship will still be father-son. And I'm sure there will be a few things they will want to tell [their mother] and not me. I am comfortable with that. That's perfectly normal in my mind.

Satish was one of three fathers who conveyed a patriarchal parenting style. He implied a certain power dynamic in that he intends to maintain parent-child rather than "dad as pal" image that

shaped in the culture of fatherhood in the United States (LaRossa 1997). By beginning with “father figure,” Satish further shaped a patriarchal image or “father as head of household.” He does not mind that his sons may feel emotional closer to their mother. For this family, the emotional divide falls along the masculine and feminine aspects of parenting. Satish had also reported that one of his most important contributions to parenting was as primary wage earner. His instrumental role allowed his wife to dedicate all of her time to mothering. Although his account of his childhood family refers to “parents,” not specifically mother or father, in some way his father must have influenced the fatherhood approach he intends to use with his sons.

The last excerpt illustrated in a little more detail how a father adjusted his parenting style. I asked Chandran if either of his parents influenced his parenting style.

I think both of them. I think my dad has always been sensitive and aware of us finding our callings, what we were meant to be when we grew up, what our skill sets are. He was always sensitive to that. I remember in fifth grade I would come back, my brother and I would do these watercolors and he would go, “You guys did that? You sure you didn’t copy from someone? You painted this?” We’d go, “Yeah we did that. Those mountains, and boats, and rivers, that’s us.” And immediately he would go, “Okay, I’ve got to put you in advanced placement. This is fantastic. You’ve got to do this,” and we would be in summer camp for painting. He watched me swim one day and he’d go, “Wow that’s fantastic. You could do 10 times better.” So he was always – he was very tuned to finding out what we were good at doing and really building on it because he believed that’s how you build a career, and I have that in me. Of course Charu, on the other hand, I think she was raised in an environment where it is different. She calls me a Romanian gymnast coach because I’m always, “Can you do that? Can you do that better? Really [daughter], can you read the alphabet? Okay, if you can read the alphabet, why not start putting sentences together? You’re putting sentences together! Great why can’t you just read? How about the newspaper?” You know, I’m always [supportive] if the kids give me an opening. That comes from my dad. That’s what my dad did. He never stopped, never stopped. My first company was [corporation] and I got double promoted, immediately he goes, “Why were you double promoted? What did they like? Do you like marketing? Good.” He sent me ten books on marketing. Then he’d go “I found out about this course at Harvard where you can do a part time MBA. You just focus on

marketing. Why don't you go check it out?" So, he's like that to this day. So, I got that from him. I think what I got from my mom is the things not to do.

I think at a very subconscious level, in some ways when [our daughter] was born, I was trying to play out the template. I think every spouse does. You play out the template subconsciously of your parents. I would engage more on paying the bills, or do more of the finances, and then we realized that wasn't working. Charu felt like she was a single parent you know changing the diapers. I always felt, "Change diapers? Change poop diapers? I understand feeding the baby with bottled milk, but who changes poop diapers? Which guy does that? I don't even know how to do it." All of that changed to some point in our relationship. We threw the template out the door and we write one that works for you.

Interviewer: And how does your mother shape your parenting?

I think my mom just played out a template that was put into her head when she was young. I think she blindly played it out. From the age of 0 to 13 my grandparents put in a set of values systems where you don't date people, you stay focused on career, you are kind of nerdy until you get a job, and there are 14 festivals you just follow it. If it's yogurt, you pour yogurt. If it's milk, you pour milk. You do not question it. And that's it. She just played out her whole life and realized that at least one of her two sons rejected the whole thing. What I've done, I think my mom has helped me out with; I try to stop myself if I am playing out a template in a programmed way. I stop myself immediately. I will say, "Why can't I change a poop diaper? Why can't I do all of them? I can learn how to do it." Some things such as, giving the baby a bath, my mom always did it. Dad would never be in the bathroom. That's not what he did. He would just never be. And I would give the little one a bath. You learn to do it. I know parts of myself say, "I can't," I tell myself, "You're going into mom mode, where you're just playing something out blindly. Just stop and see if it makes sense."

From his narrative, Chandran was initially patriarchal in his approach to fatherhood. He made his adjustment based on his mother's parenting rather than considering that his father reinforced gendered patterns in the family. His hyperbolic narrative excluded any overlap of parenting activities between his mother and father. Chandran used "never" to describe his father's childcare activities and "always" to describe his mother's contribution. Thus, there is the

“excluded middle” in that hyperbolic narrative does not allow for any possibility that his father may have changed a diaper or two (LaRossa and Sinha 2006). His perception was that his parents constructed very strict gendered patterns with absolutely no overlap. Consequently, Chandran relied on a discourse concerning parenting roles in his Indian family. His field of action, or *habitus*, now includes the culture of American fatherhood. In other words, his perception is that fathering in the United States differs from fathering in India in that American fathers are intimately involved in daily childcare activities.

Also noteworthy was that his father is a positive role model for him; thus, he attributed the gendered patterns in his parents’ household to his mother’s lack of assertiveness. Both Chandran and his wife have full-time jobs in the paid labor force. They both discussed the difficulties they encountered in their transition to parenthood. Chandran made the connection between his “template” and his parents’ parenting to adjust his contribution to childcare. However, he still had a gendered view in that he attributes the patterns from his parents to the individual (i.e., his mother) rather than the system of patriarchy. His wife did agree that he contributes significantly to childcare activities. In fact, unlike his wife’s job, he reported that he works from home on occasion. Thus, he has more flexibility in his work schedule to address childcare needs such as child’s illness.

FATHERS AND SONS

For the couples who had sons (14 couples,) six couples emphasized the father-son relationship. The other couples did not explicitly discuss the father-son relationship, but that does not imply that all parents emphasized the father-son relationship. In some instances, there seemed to be a concern surrounding the son’s gender competence. That is, parents were

concerned that the son acquired and demonstrated the “appropriate” gender behavior for boys. Commonly, parents demonstrated this concern by promoting the father-son relationship. In the following excerpt, Nita and Nikhil discuss toys that they have for their boys to play with. Initially, I had asked them about marriage preference for their sons. Nita pointed out that they could grow up to be gay, so who knows what the future holds? Both parents said that that they were not concerned about their sons’ sexual orientation as long as they were happy. To illustrate their thoughts on this, they explained that they attempt to raise their boys androgynously-- primarily through toys.

- Nita: They have a kitchen, but they play – I specifically bought them a kitchen and they have a firehouse, but they also have a house that –
- Nikhil: They are typically boys in some ways though. They’re very, very typical.
- Nita: They love cars.
- Nikhil: Love cars, fire trucks, I mean they’re very physical. They’re not –
- Nita: We’ve got them pots and pans. They have a house.
- Nikhil: Now OK, we have not got them dolls, but they have their stuffed animals. They have their teddy bears and that kind of stuff.
- Nita: Specifically, we haven’t bought them dolls.
- Nikhil: No.
- Nita: I mean if they asked for it, I would. (pause)
- Nikhil: Well, I suppose by me not answering that right away, I might have a little bit of a problem with it.
- Nita: I mean if we got a Barbie doll, you’d probably –
- Nikhil: I don’t like that stupid thing even for a girl, so – I’ve got a problem with those things for any kid, not even just for boys.
- Nita: But you didn’t have a problem with me buying the kitchen for them.

- Nikhil: No, but if – yeah, if they’re playing dress up with the dolls, I think I might-
- Nita: They have a lot of toys, but I specifically got them capes and costumes and –
- Nikhil: Boy stuff. That’s fine, but yeah, OK, if they’re trying to put a little frock on dolls and things, sure I would have a problem with that.

The concluding remark, “boy stuff” demonstrated that these parents are not raising their boys so androgynously. Kane (2006) found that parents of young boys reinforce masculinity through the type of toys that they allow their sons to play with. Kitchen sets or cooking toys were acceptable, but dolls, nail polish, or any overly feminine toys were not acceptable. Toys associated with cooking or cleaning were acceptable because parents considered the boys to be pretending to perform domestic activities that they would eventually perform as adults. However, more frilly and feminine type toys worked against hegemonic masculinity. With the tendency of society to conflate gender and sexual orientation, the concern parents had with these toys is that playing with them would indicate that their son was homosexual. Perhaps Nikhil’s anxiety over his sons playing with dolls indicates that he was attempting to confirm heterosexuality.

Sometimes mothers were first to assert their sons’ gender competence. I asked Darshan and Deepa who their son talks to when he has a problem.

- Darshan: More mommy.
- Deepa: I talk to him. He’s a momma’s boy that way. He and daddy are connected. They have all the same interests, like –
- Darshan: Cars, bikes. Well, his interest is reading about cars –
- Deepa: He knows all the makes and models and what the headlights look like, what the tires and the wheels –

- Interviewer: Do you watch NASCAR?
- Darshan: No.
- Deepa: No. See, his dad, it's now three generations in a row. They take cars apart. We buy cars, we fix cars –
- Darshan: We don't sell them.
- Deepa: We have a lot of old cars, we always have cars that need this, that, or the other thing done but they do it by hand. It's a hobby. His dad has always been like that so he was raised doing that. And now [our son] is clearly following those footsteps. That was before age one. [Our son] was fascinated with cars like I cannot even tell you, I think it's a genetic thing or something. Because I see it in the way he's always been so in love with cars.
- Interviewer: Do you work on them together?
- Darshan: Yeah.
- Deepa: He can change the oil now, I think, right? Because daddy changes the oil on the car, so they have their interests that they do together. But if he needs to talk about something, it will be me he'll come to.
- Interviewer: Oh, I see. What else do you do together?
- Darshan: Bikes, scouting.

In this example, Deepa did not want her son to appear to be too much of a “mamma’s boy.” She not only reinforced their son’s engagement in masculine activities with his father, but essentialized the activities as well. Possessing the skill and passion for working on cars is genetic, thus there is an intrinsic masculinity that passes from the father to the son. Deepa dominated the narrative; Darshan did not facilitate this dialogue concerning the time they spent on working on cars. After acknowledging that their son has an emotional connection with her, the mother reframed the characterization to confirm son’s masculinity and illustrate his relationship with the father that has parity to her mother-son relationship.

Although there were patterns of masculinity similar to Kane's (2006) study, my participants did not overly demonstrate hegemonic masculinity. I specifically use "hegemonic masculinity" as defined by Connell (1995). He discussed masculinity as actually defined by its distance from all that is feminine. Thus, masculinity is understood in terms of its difference. We tend to define masculinity by what it is *not* rather than what it is. Connell (1995) used the term "hegemony" to refer to the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life (p. 77). Hence, hegemonic masculinity justifies and reinforces gender practices such as patriarchy in the family or the subordination of women in the paid workforce. This form of masculinity is ubiquitous in society and works to establish a collective power in social institutions. As articulated, hegemonic masculinity is demonstrated through innate ability and passion for physical prowess (read: sports). More importantly, heterosexual and masculinity are conflated in this definition of hegemonic masculinity.

However, my participants tended to not talk about demonstrating gender through sports or physical prowess. Cooper (2000) defined a "new" masculinity by researching fatherhood and organization of work among men who work in Silicon Valley. This new masculinity is defined more by intellect and competence in high-tech occupations than in athletics or the sporting arena. These men distance themselves from hegemonic masculinity in that they do not want to be associated with the "frat boy" type of man or the "locker room talk" that degrades women (p. 383). Instead, competence at their job demonstrates a large part of their masculinity. Defining manhood by work identity is not unusual, but this new masculinity it is more nuanced. These men seek to demonstrate their masculinity by their cognitive ability to get the job done. In their youth, they may have been teased for being the smart nerd, but in adulthood, this intellect translates into higher paying and more complex work environments. Because all of my

participants have at least a bachelor's degree and all work in upper management, medicine, engineering, or computer science fields, I apply this new masculinity to them. While none of the fathers in my study emphasized athletic activities in their adulthood, many did discuss the importance of engaging in sport activities as youth. As youth they did at least somewhat engage in hegemonic masculinity. In part, participation in sports may have allowed them to find common ground with their white counterparts as well as avoid being a victim of hegemonic masculinity. The brown kid with the funny name may be more accepted by his white peers when he can throw a football really far or slam-dunk a basketball.

Another gender difference was noted with the father and son relationship. Despite the previous excerpt with Darshan and Deepa, some of the fathers had a heightened concern that only they could relate or understand their sons. This connection might be explicitly addressed or more subtle as with Ramesh.

Interviewer: If they need to ask for permission to do something – if they want to play with a friend or go see a movie, who would they go to?

Ramesh: Well, it depends who they would get a yes from. My son would always come to me. My daughter is a little more deliberate in her approach. She would come to me and then cycle back to Mom if I said no. Or, go to Mom first knowing that Dad's gonna say no.

Throughout his interviews, Ramesh never seemed to lean towards a preference for his son over his daughter. In fact, his narrative was usually quite neutral. However, on the issue of communication, he implied that there is a constant and close relationship. By saying that his son “always” comes to him reads as though the connection is father-son exclusively. There was no overlap in communication with the mother. In the next excerpt a father explained parenting differences with his wife resting primarily on communication styles.

Interviewer: Do you and your wife tend to agree on how to raise your children? Parenting styles?

Anish: Probably not. She's probably right on a lot of things, but in terms of boys and tackling boys in terms of all the issues that we have I would probably handle it slightly different, but, you know, everybody has their own style. She's right, but, just saying the same thing ten times is just not going to work with teenage boys. You say it once or twice. You reiterate after some time. You let some time to go by. You can't be at it every day, every week, every hour.

The mother cannot understand the mechanics of the way teenage boys behave. Clearly, the father's gender gives him inside knowledge that his wife is not privy to. Anish has been a teenage boy, therefore he can reference this stage of his life to understand how to communicate with his son. Mothers also reinforced gendered communication. I asked Jyoti and Jay who would eventually have the "sex talk" with their son.

Jyoti: He'll have it.

Jay: Well it's funny because like you think about how you were raised and –

Jyoti: Yeah, no one had the sex talk with me.

Jay: Well no one had the sex talk with me. But, I didn't tell my parents when I was dating in high school. So, any girlfriends that I had in the past they didn't really know about. It was just they were just friends. They came over, they were friends, you know, it wasn't anything big. So, I think about the things that I did and the things that I wish I could have done with my parents. I wish I could have talked to my parents about it.

Interviewer: Oh. So that's what you're saying. You would just want to know.

Jay: Yeah, I mean, I would want to be open, you know have an open line of communication no matter what it's about. And I want, you know, him to have trust in us that we're not going to just explode, that we're going to actually talk about things.

Generally, many parents refrain from initiating the “sex talk” (Warren 1995). When parents do initiate this conversation with their children they are communicating their own values, attitudes, and sexual beliefs (p.173). Thus, the difficulty may arise from not only being the reluctant instructor, but also accountability for how the parent views his or her sexuality. With the exception of one family, the sex talk was gendered, meaning mothers should talk to daughters and fathers talk to sons. One mother initiated the conversation after she and her son were watching a popular television show where the topic was adolescent sexual activity. She explained that she felt she could not let the topic pass without understanding what her teenage son thought about the show. Otherwise, parents believed gender of the child determined who would have the “talk.”

For parents, talking about sex is the epitome of open communication. If a parent and child can have the sex talk, then they can talk about anything. As Jay discussed, it was not simply that his parents did not talk about sex with him, they did not talk about much else that was going on his life. Again, in regards to adjusting his parenting style, communication was a key difference from first- to second-generation parents. Non-Indian families in the United States may not have any more open communication than the first-generation Indian American family. What is noteworthy is that there was a perception that families in the United States value and exercise open family communication. Thus, the fathers in my study intend to develop open communication patterns with their children.

To summarize, there was a clear trend for fathers to particularly identify with their sons. Furthermore, in the family, there tended to be an expectation that fathers were better than mothers to understand and communicate to their sons. Common in the culture of fatherhood in the United States is that fathers are the male role models for sons. Thus, the emphasis among my

participants was not necessarily the actual communication dynamic as much as the importance of the father as a masculine role model for his son. Fathering provides men with an opportunity to nurture their sons so they will eventually realize similar goals and accomplishments that they had.

FAMILY TIME VERSUS FATHER-CHILD TIME

The fathers in my study were more likely to reference family time instead of father-child time. I probed to determine if substantial amount father-child interaction involved playtime or leisure activities. Oftentimes, American fathers meet the expectation for parent-child involvement through leisure activities (Coakley 2009). Moreover, this interaction is defined as masculine and distanced from feminized activities such as meal preparation or bathing. For the most part, fathers reported that leisure activities were more likely to be enjoyed as a family. About half the fathers did discuss specific activities. If the topic was discussed in the joint interview, the mothers would highlight or praise the interaction, but the reverse never occurred. Fathers in my study did not highlight activities that mothers shared with children. Sporting activities were not overly popular. That is not to say that the fathers did not engage in sporting activities in the backyard, but none of the fathers discussed any kind of backyard play, though two fathers coached their sons' athletic teams. Jain and Belsky (1997) also found in their study on first-generation Indian American fathers, father-child interaction was not likely to be characterized by leisure activities, though they admit this was not the focus of their study. The picture that emerged is that father-child activities were more likely to be expressed as family activities. For example, Kashi's job involves very long workdays. I asked Kashi and Kiran if their family can have dinner together during the week.

- Kiran: No.
- Kashi: Not most of the time.
- Kiran: Yeah.
- Kashi: But when I come [home], they are doing their homework. But they will come briefly, and we'll exchange some things [conversation]. But I try to explain to them that if I can work more often because – this idea that I have to be working and making money – we can provide for them, and so that Mommy doesn't have to work, and she can be more there. And it's not like, I don't want to see them. So they have this idea. And until I go tuck her in, I make [my daughter] say a little prayer and I [talk to them]. So it's limited, but over weekends, we go places together.

Kashi's considered his father role to be mostly instrumental, so he does not spend much time with his children during the week. However, weekends are family time. For most families, including dual-earner families, weekends were spent involved in family activities. Work and school schedules constrain family activities during the week. Consequently, weekends are parent-child time- or as most of my fathers described, family time. About half the fathers did report specific father-child interaction. Anish described spending time with his daughter.

- Anish: I try to set time aside for taking my daughter to the movies. If she wants. He [son] doesn't want to go to movies with me anymore because now he's got his own friends, which is fine, but I'm saying earlier when he was younger. Same thing I'm doing with my daughter. Like she would rather see [kind of movie], you know, and it changes over the years- her type of movies. He would want to see those movies [when he was her age].
- Interviewer: How old is she now?
- Anish: She's 12.
- Interviewer: Does she still want to hang out with you?
- Anish: No.

Interviewer: No? What age do they stop doing that?

Anish: Probably 11 or ten.

Interviewer: Yeah, it's just not cool to hang out with mom and dad.

Anish: Yeah, but if it's in their favor, it's fine. Like, if I'm going to take them [daughter and her friends] to see Johnny Depp in *Pirates of the Caribbean*, she's fine with that. I'm gonna buy her soda and this and that and not tell mommy, you know, then she's fine with that.

Anish was the only father to explain such a detail account of interaction with his children. From his narrative, he works at creating one-one-one time with his children. He was also one father in particular who demonstrated the “father as pal” approach to fathering. By noting that he buys his daughter treats that they do not tell the mother about, Anish alluded to relationship he might have that is separate from the relationship his daughter has with her mother.

Many of the parents mentioned that they restrict the number of TV hours their children watch as well as the kinds of shows. Ramesh discussed their approach to monitoring how much TV his children watch.

So we don't say, “Three hours this weekend, and that's it, so use the three hours however you want to do it.” We just kind of go with the flow. Sometimes, we get kid friendly blockbuster movies, and we do that. We were watching *Survivor* together as a family. They enjoy that and *American Idol*. So, there's a couple of shows during the week where we either let them watch live one evening if it's not too late or we DVR it and watch it Friday evenings.

In this excerpt, I asked him about television viewing, and he ended up describing family time together. This type of account was typical in terms of describing father-child interaction. Perhaps the reason family time is more common than specific parent-child interaction is due to the differing behaviors and perceptions between Indian Americans and non-Indian American families. In contrast to the individualism ideology of the United States, India emphasizes the

family or a collectivist ideology. This ideology may continue in the second-generation family. From my own involvement in the Indian American community, parties typically involve the entire family. Third-generation children are not left at home with a babysitter, social activities are for the whole family.

CONCLUSION

I used the expression, “Active Fathering” to capture the dynamic of the fathering role among my participants. Unlike Lareau’s (2005) study where fathers were relying heavily on their wives for information, the fathers in my study did directly report details about their children, however, there were varying degrees of details reported based on their overall contribution to parenting. Fathers in my study demonstrated more of “new” masculinity in that they did not seem to embrace rigid gendered expectations in the family (Cooper 2000). Unlike hegemonic masculinity, these “new” fathers do not negotiate masculinity by distancing themselves from feminine activities (i.e., housework and childcare.) Although the fathers in my study exhibited varying contributions to domestic activities, none of them expressed that they believed household labor to be women’s work.

I am reluctant to use the word “new” in regards to fatherhood. In regards to semantics, caution should always be taken when conveying that a father is exhibiting “new” behavior in the family. For this reason, it is important to situate the culture and conduct of fatherhood within the appropriate historical context. Reviewing the history makes the notion that the father of today is engaging in parenting activities like never before, very problematic. The work of Douglas and Michaels (2004) was useful in exploring current trends in intensive mothering. However, they reinforce the notion that today’s father demonstrates a new kind of fatherhood. They aptly note

that society views the father who knows the names of his child's pediatrician as a saint; the mother who does not as a sinner (P. 8). Interestingly, they reinforce this perspective when they note, "Of course there has been a revolution in fatherhood over the past thirty years, and millions of men today tend to the details of child rearing in ways their own fathers rarely did" (p. 7). LaRossa (1997) argues that ignoring the historical context of fatherhood perpetuates a power dynamic between men and women within the family. That is, mothers should not be upset if fathers are not contributing equal amounts of childcare, because at least they are doing more than their fathers did. Historical evidence indicates that fathers may have been changing diapers long before the 1970s.

Not all the fathers in my study described their parenting contributions in terms of difference from their fathers. A few fathers did note differences, but mostly these differences addressed the changing social and economic contexts. The fathers in my study did not have the same concerns as their first generation Indian American fathers had over financial well-being and cultural maintenance for their families. When differences, such as diaper changing or communication, were noted the difference was in reference to Indian fathers, not all fathers in the United States. The fathers in my study carried the perception that they were contributing more to parenting than their *Indian* fathers did. The implication was that my participants believed that their childcare involvement was more on par with other American dads. They have incorporated the dominant mainstream American view of not only fatherhood but also parenting into their approach to fathering. They reported engagement in daily childcare activities as well as interest in maintaining emotional relationships with their children. The dynamic in fatherhood between India and the United States, almost suggests that the perceived mainstream American

fatherhood model is preferred. Through the Orientalist lens, Indian fathering is outdated and not relevant in the lives of my participants.

However, fathers were a blend of their American experiences and the ancestral culture of their parents. The fathers in my study did not completely reject the parenting style of their parents. Like their parents, fathers continued to stress the importance of academic excellence. And while they may not attend to the cultural objects, such as language or food, second-generation fathers considered maintaining these cultural objects and experiences important to the overall family's culture. Fathers maintained religion in the family and were as likely as mothers to take children to the temple. Consequently, the fathers in my study have developed a multi-dimensional habitus. Comprised of hegemonic views on American parenting, as well as Indian culture, fathers negotiated parenting with a "foot" in each "world." Based on their perceptions, my participants negotiated different parenting styles that utilize the best from both "worlds."

CHAPTER 8:

PARENTING CULTURE: CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

The preceding chapters illustrate different components of the second-generation Indian American family. Beyond these tangible cultural objects and experiences, such as religion, how is culture demonstrated or understood by this group? Ultimately, I found that the family culture is a blend of American and Indian traditions. Though hardly unexpected, I decided to focus the ways that Indian culture was integrated in the family rather than substantiating the assimilation of American culture into the Indian American family.

I use the word “integrated” not to capture the adaptation or assimilation of culture, but rather the subtlety of Indian culture within the overall family culture. American mainstream culture is quite evident. The primary conduit for integrating Indian culture into the family is the Indian American community. Through involvement with other Indian Americans, people develop social networks and through these networks people construct and maintain their sense of ethnic identity. I explore the importance of the local and transnational community. By transnational community, I refer to India. All the participants travel to India and maintain friend and family relationships there. Thus, involvement in the both communities remains central to teaching Indian culture to third-generation children. Lastly, parents discuss how they feel about their children’s connection, as adults, to the Indian community. Before I address these three components, I substantiate the way I arrived at the notion of integrated culture. Also, I explore how the parents actually view the preservation of Indian culture in their families.

INTEGRATION OF CULTURE

In analyzing the transcripts, I began to focus on indications of culture that were not so explicitly stated by my participants. The notion of integrated culture was developed from the individual interviews. As participants discussed their childhood, if it fit into the conversation, I would ask them whether their parents ever said they were becoming “too American.” This question was initially built into the probes to understand generational conflict within the first-generation family. However, I dropped the question for two reasons.

First, none of the participants discussed inter-generational conflict in this manner. Parents structured family life within Indian culture, but participants rarely discussed any objections to or problems with the way they were raised. Occasionally, a female participant discussed her annoyance with the strict curfew while in high school. Consequently, I decided to drop the question because not only did it generally not yield very much information, asking the question felt awkward. Interjecting the question seemed to almost dig for family conflict. If, though, the conversation developed in a direction that I could smoothly pose the question, then I did.

For example, Charu was explaining the communication patterns she had with her first-generation parents. She described the typical pattern of gendered communication, in that she discussed education and professional issues with her father and emotional or friend issues with her mother. At this point, probing to explore how her parents established a demarcation between American and Indian culture seemed appropriate. I asked Charu if her parents ever told her she was becoming too American.

No, they never really did. I think it was important for them for us to acclimate [to American culture] as best as we could. But at the same time, they made sure that the Indian culture was always available. Wherever we ended up moving, whatever community we were in, they made sure that we had Indian friends or participated in Indian cultural activities.

Growing up I never got, “We don’t do that because we’re Indian,” or “We do that because we are Indian.”

It was this explanation that enabled me to make the connection between culture and ethnic identity. Shaping a cultural identity is comprised of both visible and invisible objects and experiences. Food, clothing, and language, are associated with the public sphere. In other words, the public face of “being Indian,” involves demonstrating proficiency in the visible cultural objects.

Another one of the participants answered the question concerning becoming too American this way: “No, they assume that you are the responsible one, [you are going to] make the right choices.” First-generation parents contrast Indian culture against American culture in subtle ways that are not always articulated. Parents will sometimes use “values” or “family values,” to highlight the elevated importance of family in the Indian community as compared to the individualist American society (which presumably values the individual over the well-being of the family). The meaning of this phrase is similar to the more conservative American lexicon “family values.” When discussing marriage preference for their children, second-generation children frequently used this notion of “family values” as well. As I will later discuss in detail, almost all of the parents preferred that, if their children marry, they marry another Indian American. The bottom line, though, was always stated as, “at least someone who has good family values,” or “good values.”

After establishing the concept of integrated culture, I also explored whether my participants gave meaning and significance to an Indian identity. Not only did participants explicitly discuss shaping an identity, but they also voiced preference in exploring other cultural identities for their children.

- Nikhil: I love going to India, but I love living here, but I love being from somewhere. I love the fact that I am not – I do like the fact that I am Indian and I live here.
- Interviewer: Not a generic white person. (laughter)
- Nikhil: Yeah, I didn't want to put it that way. I do like that.
- Interviewer: Why do you think that is?
- Nikhil: I do like having a place that I can identify with or a culture that I identify with. I do.
- Interviewer: But why? Do you know why?
- Nikhil: No, I can't explain it. I can't put my finger on why, but a lot of Americans, I'm sure in your family background, there's probably all kinds of things, all kinds of –
- Nita: Irish, English.
- Nikhil: You know, it's common. It's not – and that's not a bad thing. And four generations from now, that will be the Indian population here I think.
- And I mean I live that identity, I do the typical things that a lot of – I don't know, I can't say that because I don't do what the Indians here think is what they're supposed to do in order to be Indian, you know? In order to be Indian, I have to take my kids to this place or go to this school or do this and I don't do any of that.
- Being Indian is about, to me, it's not about going to the temple or learning to –
- Nita: Not hanging around other Indians.
- Nikhil: Play an Indian instrument or hang around with other Indians. It's just a set of values.
- Nita: It's where you come from, it's a set of values.

Years ago, I was speaking to a friend from my husband's community about his experiences at a large university. I asked this young man if there was a large Indian community at his school and

if he was involved in Indian cultural activities. He told me that there was an Indian American organization and that it had a lot of visibility on campus. He said, “It’s hip to be brown.”

Nikhil’s words in the preceding excerpt remind me of this sentiment. Indian Americans straddle a cultural paradox whereby they are admired and “othered” simultaneously. For this analysis, though, I am interested in the admired or perhaps fetishized view of Indian identity to the extent that Nikhil readily accepts his exotic non-white status in American society. He cannot articulate what an Indian identity *is*. Nita and Nikhil both describe identity as a “value,” without actually defining what that value is. They tell me what an Indian identity is *not*. In fact, in their opinion it is not the cultural objects that are visible to mainstream society. I asked them why they thought second-generation Indian Americans typically define identity by a set of cultural objects. Nita explained this view in this way:

Nita: Because I think they’re brought up American – very American, but they’re still trying to grasp at being Indian, and what they think is Indian is not the important part of India to me. Dressing up, eating the food, that’s not Indian. I mean I look at more in terms of nutritional value, and these guys are like, “Oh, yeah, we love Indian food,” or, “Would like to do Indian parties.” And that’s fine and a social thing, but that’s not all India is about.

Interviewer: Do you have any view or any opinion on why you think that is?

Nita: I think because that’s – it’s a sense of belonging I think because no matter that even if they’re brought up here, they’re not 100 percent American. I mean you just don’t look 100 percent American, so right from the start people are going to - they will ask you where you’re from. And so I think maybe it’s a sense of – the parents actually. Maybe we want to belong and also make the parents happy.

None of the other second-generation participants described an Indian identity in this way.

However, I did not get an impression that the other participants disagreed with Nita and Nikhil.

Although everyone reported that they engaged in the more visible and stereotypical cultural markers, no one necessarily defined being “Indian,” in this manner. Yet, for this population,

engaging in these behaviors is unavoidable. The impetus for doing so originates from outside and within the ethnic group. As Nita said, the second-generation are not “100 percent American,” thus non-Indians are likely to impose an identity by asking questions about ethnicity.

Accomplishing an ethnic identity, at least in part, plays out in the public context. That is, “doing ethnicity” employs a cultural script that derives meaning from social interaction (cf., West and Zimmerman 1987). The motivation can also come from within the ethnic group by providing a sense of group membership. As children, the second-generation to some extent was motivated to please their parents. However, to continue to maintain Indian culture into adulthood indicates a motivation that transcends this micro-level context.

A concern about American hegemonic culture appears to be another aspect of the difficulty in articulating precisely what it means to be “Indian.” Participants do not explicitly voice concerns as much as communicate a preference for diversity. I asked Bimal if Indian culture was important in how he is raising his child.

I mean it’s definitely important, but I wouldn’t want him [son] [to know only] Indian culture. I mean I think that to me, I like a person who’s very all around and Indian culture. You can teach a lot about that. You can know about other cultures too, whether it be Chinese, European, Native American, whatever.

He did not specifically reject American culture, but he also did not mention it. Bimal is explaining a preference for his son to be multicultural. Perhaps in a response to American hegemonic culture or a critique of the fact that mainstream Americans tend to possess little knowledge about other ethnic groups in the United States. Five of the parents expressed a preference for exposing their children to different cultures, rather than just American or just Indian. Paresh and Priyum explained this way:

Paresh: We can teach him one culture based on [our own culture]. It doesn't have to be Indian culture. It is Indian culture because we're Indian. But, it could be Spanish culture; it could be any other culture. We're not very specific to Indian, because India is the right culture. We're specifically Indian because Indian is our culture. And we don't want him to have just American culture, because there is no culture in America. That's the way I feel.

Priyum: That there's no culture, because it's every culture at the same time.

In response to hegemonic culture, parents strive for more diverse ways to raise their children. They reject American culture because it is lacking in "culture" or it is, in a sense, cultureless because it is the dominant culture. American culture is "everything"; it is confusion, chaos, and nonspecific. Indian culture, in contrast, is moral, connected, and grounded. However, none of the participants described the actual practice of socializing children to diversity. For the most part, diversity was a theoretical preference. No one described a viable plan to expose their children to Chinese American or Spanish culture.

I was also interested in whether couples discussed their parenting strategies before they had children. Did parents have specific conversations about their notion of "being Indian" and how this characterization would be transferred to their children? No one reported that they had this kind of conversation. Jay explained it this way:

I don't know if we really talked. I think it was just kind of understood because we know the way each other are. Like you just know – I know she's very strong as far as, like, our religion and culture and traditions. And she knows I am as well. That's part of why we also got married to each other.

Although my participants engaged in visible cultural experiences such as food and clothing, they also hinted at the intangible. They engaged in those stereotypical components of identity, but at the same time, acknowledged that culture cannot be reduced to these simple

demonstrations. Constructing an ethnic identity involves a complex relationship between the visible and readily available and the intangible or subtle cultural experiences.

Rather than focus on a typology of culture, I explored family traditions to understand how family culture is created. Primarily, through socialization, the family's traditions are interpreted, represented, and appropriated. Ethnic identity and familism are mutually reinforcing (Sillars 1995: 377). Basically, ethnic traditions and culture are primarily learned and maintained within the family. However, ethnicity is demonstrated and reinforced in the public domain as well. Participation in ethnic groups, clubs, festivals, and weddings, all reinforce "the distinctiveness of family interactions, thereby strengthening collective identity of family members" (p. 378.) Community involvement maintains, teaches, and strengthens ethnic identity.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS: LOCAL AND TRANSNATIONAL

For Indian Americans, maintaining connections to the community in the United States as well as the transnational community is vital to ethnic identity. Membership provides a sense of belonging and shared experiences. As youth, many second-generation children participated in Indian American groups through their own efforts as well as through their parents' community. Members are maintaining traditions and creating them too. Maira (2002) researched the notion of cultural "authenticity" within the youth Indian American sub-culture. Her findings indicate that it is important for second-generation youth to demonstrate their Indian identity to other co-ethnics. As adults, this quality did not seem to be present with my participants. Mostly, my participants appeared to find a space to demonstrate their ethnicity or basically associate with others who have similar life experiences.

Additionally, all of the participants reported that they had made at least two trips to India across their life course. Some participants travel every two or three years. How often participants travel to India and the length of these visits depended on their financial situation as well as vacation time from work. All of the participants still have extended family members in India, and family obligations trump sightseeing when traveling to India. Joshi (2006) refers to the trips as a transnational experience. Indeed, travel to India is not a vacation; it is a series of interactions that greatly influence the individual's ethnic identity (p. 69). Second-generation parents still desire travel to India and have included their third-generation children. I use the word "desire" because with busy lifestyles, travel to India requires a lot of planning. All the participants stated that they feel going to India is the best way to expose their children to Indian culture.

The Local Community

None of the participants explicitly described their motivation for being a part of the Indian American community as some sort of ethnic maintenance. Instead, the motivation was expressed simply as "our friends." I found social groups were arranged by immigration status. My participants, in general, socialized with other second-generation Indian Americans. In the case where a second-generation participant has a first-generation spouse, it appears that the first-generation person is included in the overall group. Socializing by immigration status was not purposefully exclusive, but rather resulted because of unique life experiences.

However, there was a line drawn between Indian and non-Indian socializing. I discovered the extent to which participants were a part of a mostly Indian community by asking who their

friends were and then probing to find out if they mix non-Indian and Indian friends at parties.

Consider Trisha and Taresh's response:

Trisha: I think we have both. I think we tend to have more Indian friends, I think, because of the two of us. He's [husband] more social than I am, so – but we have a nice mix of both.

Interviewer: Do you mix the groups, your Indian friends, non-Indian friends? When you have parties, do you invite both or do you tend to have parties –

Taresh: Sometimes.

Trisha: Rarely, though.

Taresh: Rarely, though. On big occasions.

Interviewer: On big occasions, you would invite both [Indians and non-Indians].

Trisha: Like when we – well, not really. When did we ever do that? No, we haven't.

Taresh: Like [our daughter's party].

Trisha: We didn't invite any of our American friends. She invited her friends, but we didn't invite any of ours. So no, we haven't. Come to think of it, no, we haven't. I don't know if it was done consciously, but I guess we just, maybe we never thought of it.

Initially, they both said they have a “mix of friends,” but if they do not even think about mixing both groups, then perhaps they do not have so many close non-Indian friends. Their third-generation daughter mixes her friend groups, but I wonder if she will as an adult. Other couples also started to describe their mix of friends, only to reveal that the groups are not so integrated.

Vijay: I think it's a mix, right? It's a mix. Yeah, I mean we socialize with our Indian friends. But we socialize with –

Vineeta: But I think we socialize just as much with our non-Indian friends.

Vijay: Yeah, we do both.

Interviewer: Do you mix them together? The groups together?

Vijay: Once in a while.

Vineeta: Occasionally because we don't get to see either one of them as much as we like to so whenever we get the opportunity, we try to keep it to a smaller group so we can keep it like more on a personal basis instead of combining.

The initial claim was of inclusiveness. Yet, further probing reveals that most likely the friend groups are not mixed together. I did wonder how the fact that I am not Indian might have influenced their initial characterizations of their social group. That is, maybe they thought accurately describing their friend networks would make me feel excluded.

One aspect of socializing that was not overtly discussed was that their children are also at these “get togethers.” In general, Indian parents – both first- and second-generation – tend to bring their children to all social functions. Children play and build relationships with the other children in the community. Sometimes the third-generation children live geographically close and see each other frequently; sometimes they only see each other when their parents socialize together. Thus, their Indian community involvement is arranged across temporal and social space (Maira 2002, Sinha 2004). Like their parents, the third-generation children learn ethnicity through peer friendships. Moreover, many of the social functions may also include a puja (religious ceremony), an Indian holiday celebration, Indian food, or Indian clothing.

One couple did attempt to articulate why their social group tends to be only other Indian Americans. In the course of this exchange, Arjun and Anu revealed much more detail about how they define their community and the importance of maintaining non-Indian friends.

Arjun: I think it's maybe just the whole - you get attracted to your – the same [people]. We'd have to do certain translations of [some of our parties]. Like the way we have certain parties is totally different than our non-

Indian parties. Just the whole, how things are done. You don't have to [explain].

Anu: But things are changing. I see it day by day. Like being involved in the schools with [with our children]. I feel more of a connection with the other moms who are non-Indian, and I do develop bonds with them. This past year, I've made a good six non-Indian friends from [my daughter's] school, but I don't know. It's seems like the American people, your average American non-Indian people, they don't make as much of an effort to carry on a relationship.

Arjun explicitly described why he gravitates towards socializing with just other Indians. It is not only that they are relieved from constant explaining of customs and traditions, but Anu believes that non-Indians do not invest as much into a friendship. More importantly, she started to make the distinction between "Indian" and "American." She is second-generation Indian American. It is not unusual for the second-generation to divide people in this way. The significance in describing identity in this way is that the second-generation Indian Americans grew-up or were born in the United States. Simply using the term, "Indian" to describe identity would seem more likely to be used by a recent immigrant from India. Cognitively, there exists a dichotomy between "being Indian" and "being American." Despite the fact that she believes it is more difficult to maintain a relationship with non-Indians, Anu (and Arjun) recognize the value in establishing and keeping these relationships.

Anu: I guess in the second grade, third grade, those two grades, I was finding that he [son] was trying to hook up, to get into that habit of [playing with the popular kids] and he made it. Somehow, he made it in there, and I think it was because he got accepted in [sports]. And a lot of it has to do with how [my husband] and I create an image of our family within the community. When we go places, how we mix with certain parents. I think we make an impression – make an impression on them, that we're not your typical Indian.

Interviewer: Which is what?

- Anu: Typical –
- Arjun: Just more like a –
- Anu: First generation I’m talking about.
- Arjun: They don’t know the, certain cultural – like how to behave when you go to a school carnival. What to do in those kind of [situations]. Some of the folks there are just recently here from China, from India. You can tell. They don’t know how to blend in, so they just sit on the side or stand on the side, versus this generation like mine. We’re all – we know how to talk to that crowd [non-Indian].

He and Anu were the only participants to actually state this difference between the first- and second-generation, though I thought many participants felt the same way. Perhaps this is the reason for the social distancing in social groups. Additionally, as youth, some second-generation Indian Americans use the term “FOB,” meaning “fresh off the boat” to describe recent immigrants from India. While there is a dichotomy between Indianness and Americanness, the level of assimilation allows the second-generation to move between both “worlds.” Anu and Arjun also indicated that a “typical Indian” is mainstream America’s view of India- and it is not positive. Otherwise, they would have said, with pride, that they are the typical Indian. As parents, their motivation for distancing themselves socially from the image of the newly immigrated Indian was not based solely on personal preference.

- Interviewer: Do you feel that you have to demonstrate that you know American culture, [or] demonstrate your American-ness?
- Anu: Before, it was more of an issue. I think with age or the way I carry myself now. It’s different.
- Interviewer: You don’t care or they don’t respond?
- Anu: Both. I really don’t care. I am what I am.

- Arjun: I don't care either. I just don't want my son in that case to be affected because I don't want that parent to kind of say, [I'm like the first-generation]. They don't really realize. So, after a game, if they [all the children] want to play together or something, I...
- Anu: ...because of any opportunity of being missed for my child. If there's going to be birthday party that he [son] wants to be involved in and the mother [non-Indian] is inviting kids of mothers that she is comfortable with, I want to be one of those mothers. I don't want my kid to be not invited to a birthday party because a mom thinks that I'm off the wall or something.
- Arjun: And then they [the parents] indirectly think the kid is going to be clueless as well.

Anu and Arjun acknowledged that they cannot be insular in their social networks, but they are pragmatic about their reasons. They sought to cultivate connections outside the Indian community to ensure their child's acceptance into these groups. They do not want their child to be perceived as having first-generation parents. By using "off the wall" and "clueless" to describe the first-generation Asian Americans, Anu and Arjun provided a glimpse into the discrimination-- at least socially-- that exists against this group. No other participants, of all immigration status, reported this kind of social negotiation, though it may be present for other parents in my study.

Going To India: The Transnational Community

All of the participants reported that they still have family in India. Family members include parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. At the core of an "authentic" Indian is "one's understanding of how things are done in India" (Joshi 2006: 69). Childhood transnational experiences were influential in shaping a sense of ethnic identity for the second-generation. They spoke about how trips to India remain a valuable way to teach third-generation children an ethnic

identity. For some parents, internalizing the identity is as important as being able to perform it.

Mohnish describes his reasons for taking his children to India.

I think the one thing I didn't mention, I think, that has maybe come up in recent years is I've had this subconscious kind of compulsion to get the kids over to India as often as practical. I think partially because of our limited ability to kind of convey it [Indian culture] and partially because I don't want them to kind of – someone to go, “what's India like?” And then they go, “I don't know.” So they've been three times now. Once, they were kind of toddlers. Once was two and a half years ago for a three week trip.

He acknowledged the challenges in transferring Indianness in the United States, but he was also concerned about the performance aspect of being Indian. Like him, his children's identity most likely will be questioned. The United States has developed a “where are you from?” culture. Well-meaning white Americans asked non-whites this question as though it is a right to understand an individual's appearance or origin of their name. As I discussed in a previous chapter, once ethnicity is established, the Indian American becomes a kind of cultural ambassador. Mohnish wanted to ensure that his children could perform the identity when required to do so.

All of the parents reported that their children enjoyed traveling to India. In general, the manifest purpose of the visits is to visit family members. Consider Amira and Anish's account of these trips:

Amira: They like the fact that they get to meet some new people and everybody's catering to them. [Asking the children], “Oh, do you want this?” They like all that pampering. But they don't like the dirtiness of [my hometown], they don't like the bumpy road. But they're OK with it. They don't complain much. But the only thing they don't like is of course the mosquito and bugs.

Interviewer: What about sightseeing?

Anish: Yeah. Definitely in Rajasthan we took them to a lot of places. Yeah, because her sister lived in [Indian state]. A lot of sightseeing there and also in Delhi. She has relatives in Delhi, so we did some sightseeing there. And I have relatives in Bombay.

Despite that there can be a lot of differences in daily living experiences between the two countries, most parents said that their children did not mind the adjustments. Family servants are common in India. There is always someone to prepare food or drink. There may even be a driver to escort families on excursions. Additionally, there are relatives, such as grandparents, who have not seen the children in a few years. Consequently, third-generation children receive a lot of attention when they visit India. Some families occasionally took extra time to specifically tour sites in India, but mostly sightseeing is confined to the cities where family resides.

Kiran: For the last three years, it was often. I have been going every year. But [not with the kids].

Kashi: I think it's like what happens is not for lack of desire or something. I understand that it's important to expose to them to the place or the country where their parents were born. But, when they have off [summer vacation], in [native Indian state], where we come from, it's blistering hot.

Kiran: [Summer] vacation is the problem.

Kashi: So what we have done is, like, we're looking forward to [building a place]. We got like a year or two, [then] we'll have a place in Bombay. And the main purpose was that down there, the temperatures are much more [tolerable] because it's in the hills. So during summer like they can go and spend some time there, and take in that [culture].

The fact that the families in my study are fairly affluent certainly allows for more travel to India. Families may be able to go more frequently or stay for longer periods of time. Thus, social class position has an impact on ethnic identity construction. Due to skin color and non-Anglo names,

Indian Americans cannot opt out of racial-ethnic position in the United States. However, their social economic status provides more flexibility in shaping an ethnic identity.

While ethnic Identity has a performance aspect, participants also believe there is a certain essential quality to being Indian. “Indianness” has some sort of intrinsic value that was not easily articulated. Travel to India provides the knowledge that satisfies the public aspect of being Indian. Being in India is not about disjointed touring about the country. The transnational community maintains ties to family in India. Living with relatives in India and absorbing these experiences is why this community is so integrated into Indian identity.

HOLIDAYS

Using a long list of American and Indian holidays, I asked each couple which they celebrated (see Appendix). Holidays are not only observed and celebrated in the family, but with the community as well. I approached holidays as “family traditions” because I wanted to capture the dynamic aspect of ethnicity. Second-generation parents keep some traditions they learned from their parents and create new traditions within their families with their third-generation children. “Traditions and rituals are seen as links to the past even as they are created and shaped by people in the present” (Pleck 2000: 20). Families maintain rituals inherited from their parents and may change them to meet their emotional and cultural needs.

There are numerous holidays and rituals celebrated in India. Depending on the Indian state, there are several holidays associated with farming or harvest times. Consequently, it was virtually impossible to provide an exhaustive list of all the potential events observed in the family. The list of American holidays was much shorter. I mostly focused on Thanksgiving and Christmas. For the Indian holidays, I provided a short list and then asked my participants to

supply any events that they celebrate or grew up celebrating. The list of Indian holidays includes: Diwali, Holi, Navratri , Pongol, and Rakhi. Diwali is one of the universal holidays celebrated across India. It occurs sometime in November (depending on the lunar cycle), and lasts for five days. Frequently, Diwali is referred to as the “Festival of Lights.” Diwali also includes a puja for the Goddess of wealth and prosperity, Lakshmi. In the United States, oftentimes, Indian Americans will attempt to equate Diwali with Christmas thereby putting more emphasis on the Indian holiday rather than the Christian one. However, from my study at least, this replacement has not really caught on. Diwali may occur in the middle of the week, as one of my participants pointed out. Christmas is on the same day every year and, due to hegemonic culture, much of the U.S. business’s shut down on and around December 25th. As one father explained,” I still fight it sometimes because I still say it’s Christmas, it’s not really our holiday.” Another father, Chandran, described his efforts to make Diwali more present in their family culture.

Diwali is one that I think going forward, we’d even like to take the day off because Diwali can be in the middle of the week. And one way to get our child to know that it’s a big deal is for us just to take that day off and plan it in advance. It could be a Tuesday or a Wednesday, but rearrange our life around it so we can take the day off. I think when I was growing up, and in the United States, the common thing is kind of a cultural show where people do dances and some people sing. I mean, that’s, I think, around the world of anyone who’s celebrating Diwali, which will continue, but there are a lot of other things that we would do in India that I would love to introduce. One is last year, we actually lit up the diyas or the lamps.

The efforts to incorporate Indian holidays were inconsistent at best. Many parents reported they would like to observe more Indian holidays, but there is not enough community support in regards to size of the Indian American community in their area, location of celebration, or United States observance.

Six of the second-generation participants reported that, as children, they did not observe Christmas. Father's resistance was cited as the reason. As adults, all but one family now celebrates Christmas in some manner. Gift giving and decorations are the two prominent components of the holiday, as they described it. Trisha's father allowed the exchange of gifts, but no decorations. As an adult, Trisha explained how she started the tradition of Christmas with her husband.

I said, "You know, I always wanted a Christmas tree when I was growing up and dad always said no. Do you mind?" And he [husband] was like, "No, why should I mind?" So, it's an artificial tree, but we do the tree and put up [decorations].

There was not always agreement between couples. Frequently, Christmas is maintained because of the third-generation children. As Deepa explained:

If you ask [our son], its the biggest thing. [He is] not going to let Christmas go. It's just so full of everything and it's a lot of fun. We just have so many years of memories built in at this point for me, and my brother, and my cousins. As people marry in, it's the same with those.

Deepa also grew up celebrating Christmas and so she has strong memories of sharing this tradition with her family. She is maintaining this tradition for her son. Others almost begrudgingly reported that they celebrated Christmas.

Mansi: Actually, you know what? Mohnish, when they were young, he even did the putting the gingerbread cookie in front of the fireplace and then in the morning, pretending that Santa came and bit the head off or ate the cookies. So yeah, we did the whole – yeah. We still have a big tree. Yeah.

Mohnish: Yeah, but that's not celebrating Christmas. I mean, so we have a tree that we put out and I think, we put some presents under there just so it doesn't look sparse or anything like that, but yeah, so all of the commercial elements of Christmas and just kind of playing along.

Mansi enjoys celebrating the holiday, but Mohnish was less enthusiastic. He downplayed the holiday by positioning their celebration outside of the sacred and into the secular. The history of Christmas in the United States highlights the paradox of the profane and the sacred (Restad 1995). The commercialization of Christmas shifted the holiday into the realm of the profane. Almost all the parents, who celebrated Christmas, added the caveat, “but, not the religious part.” Thus, these parents are creating a family tradition that suits their emotional needs within the dominant society’s observance of this holiday. Jay basically explained the reason they celebrated Christmas was to help his child fit in.

I think we’re celebrating Christmas now because I don’t want him to go to school and [other kids] say, “what did you get for Christmas?” [and he is not able to answer.] I don’t want him to be a misfit. I want him to fit into the culture, into the society. So, and it’s – I look at it is as a gift. There’s nothing wrong with giving a gift, it’s always a positive thing. So, why not celebrate it? We don’t know too much about Christmas. That’s – it’s not our culture, but we celebrate it more for our kids.

Jay also rationalized the observance of Christmas as participation in benevolent gift giving. It was not unusual for parents to report that they observed Santa, gift giving, and decorations for their third-generation children. In fact, non-Indian parents might report similarly, reinforcing Christmas as a secular event that simply creates cultural unity. In the next excerpt, Heera explained that they also celebrate Christmas for their child and that she had to explain to her child why Christmas instead of other holidays.

But I told him it’s not a religious thing. If you’re Jewish, you have Hanukkah but if you’re not then you pretty much don’t have anything at that time of year. All the kids talk about what Santa’s bringing them so you don’t want you child to feel like Santa doesn’t like them so he believes in Santa. He believes in the Tooth Fairy. He believes in all these things and I like that he believes in it because as a child you believe in that stuff but never again so we do do the Christmas tree thing. He almost wanted to do Kwanza and Hanukkah also. I was kind of like well, we’ll

just pick one right now, OK? But he's very like innocent in that sense that oh, why don't we do everything?

Heera did not explain why the holiday chosen was Christmas. Though she did acknowledge the cultural hegemonic demand of the holiday. Restad (1995) explains that in the late nineteenth century, newspaper articles and editorials encouraged non-Christian groups to celebrate Christmas. The expectation of these writers was for Christmas to be the ceremonial unifier bringing diverse groups together, especially at a time when immigration rates from Europe were so high. Jews were also encouraged to keep Christmas traditions. By the early 1900s, the Jewish community was split on participating in the holiday celebrations. This debate, involving prominent Rabbi's, played out in public speeches and newspaper editorials. Much of the argument for celebrating the event was centered on the ideology of the holiday. That is, everyone can appreciate the good will and fellowship. As Christmas emerged as a secular community celebration of pageants, shopping, and parties, Jews were encouraged to participate. Why should they miss out on a shopping season (p. 159)? Thus, Christmas was not a Christian holiday, but a multicultural and national event that can be enjoyed by everyone. However, this message is unidirectional. That is, mainstream Christians are not encouraged to take part in other religious holidays, nor do macro-level structures support recognizing any other holiday, such as Hanukkah or Ramadan.

Rakhi is really more of a ritual, not a holiday. It is widely recognized across India and according to my participants, has maintained observance in the United States as well. Rakhi is a family ritual shared between brothers and sisters.² Based on the lunar cycle, Rakhi occurs in

² There are many websites that explain the history and purpose of Rakhi. I recommend the following website: www.Rakhi-gifts.com. This website gives a succinct overview and also

August. The ritual, led by the mother, usually lasts fifteen minutes and ends with the sister tying yarn around the brother's wrist. Rakhi is the term for the actual yarn. The yarn may be simple red threads or quite decorative with beads and sequins. The brother gives the sister gifts of clothing, jewelry, or money. The ritual is performed for the well-being of the brothers. In turn, the brothers vow to protect the sisters. Because the cousin relationship is similar to the sibling relationship, Rakhi takes place between cousins as well as brothers and sisters. Consider Trisha's response when asked if she and her husband recognize Rakhi.

Trisha: Yes. Big on Rakhi. [Our son] has every single Rakhi that [our daughter] has ever tied on him. He [husband] has one sister. She sent it to him every year, and so far, in [number of years] he has always received her Rakhi on the day of Rakhi. Just by chance or coincidence or whatever you want to say. So, yeah, we do it long distance.

She explained the importance of rakhi in her current family as well family in India. Her husband's sister lives in India, so this family ritual maintains continuity between the local and transnational community. Trisha gave insight into the importance of this ritual by noting that he not only received the Rakhi every year, but that it arrives *on the actual day of Rakhi*. To understand this importance, we can think about birthday cards designed specifically for recognition after the fact. A belated birthday wish is given after the day has passed because recognizing a birthday on the actual day is all part of honoring the person. Satish explained the importance of Rakhi in his birth family and how he intends to keep this tradition with his children.

Satish: That was big because I've got two younger sisters so I would give them the gifts and they'd tie the Rakhi. So that was something very big growing up. [Our sons], right now, they're too young [to participate].

examples of gifts. On this site, you can see examples of Rakhi and appropriate gifts for brothers to give to sisters.

Though his sons do not have a sister, they have cousins who would be considered “sisters.”

Chandran explained how his daughter will perform Rakhi for her cousins.

Chandran: Oh, yes. Huge. Oh my God. Absolutely. It’s a big deal. In fact, Rakhi was just ten days ago. So she’s [daughter] got little kid cousins an hour away from where we live and we want to get her going on it right away.

Charu: So this will actually be her first year of Rakhi because, again, she was too young last year.

Most parents discussed Rakhi in this manner. All but three participants grew-up observing Rakhi and everyone else currently observed or intends to observe it with third-generation children. Parents described the importance of Rakhi with expressions such as, “it’s big,” or “it’s huge.” An interesting juxtaposition of Christmas and Rakhi emerges. Each of these events represents different end of the cultural spectrum. Christmas is an American holiday almost akin to the Forth of July. Businesses close on Christmas or slow down activity the week of (with the exception of retail and travel) more at this time of year than at any other time. Thus, Christmas is a national holiday. On the other end of the cultural spectrum, is Rakhi.

Traditions of “ethnic” families are portrayed as committed to family solidarity. This solidarity, however, also creates the exception within the mainstream culture. In other words, ethnic families are portrayed as “keeping to themselves” and maintaining traditions that are different or simply not practiced by Americans (Pleck 2000:5). The ritual of Rakhi defines an intimate family tradition. Celebrating Christmas integrates or assimilates Indian Americans into American mainstream society, but Rakhi defines ethnic meaning for the family.

STAYING IN THE COMMUNITY

I wanted to explore how parents felt about the relationship their third-generation children, as adults, would have with the Indian American community. All parents reported that they would like their children to have a connection with the Indian American community and to continue this connection into adulthood. This connection would be strongly recognized through marriage. I asked all parents, regardless of the age of their children, if they had a preference as to whom their child or children would eventually marry. All but four parents did state a preference for the future spouse. Four sets of parents stated that they simply wanted their children to “be happy.” In the pursuit of happiness, any partner that made them happy would in turn make the parents happy. Actually, all of the parents said that their child’s happiness was most important. However, beyond that, parents stated that they would prefer their child married someone Indian. This preference was explained by the view that marrying a co-ethnic will strengthen their marriage and as well as maintain consistency with family traditions.

Some parents believed that a marriage will be more harmonious if the two people shared a common culture. Additionally, parents wanted to ensure that they could relate culturally to the person that their child married. None of the parents expressed a desire to arrange their child’s marriage. However, two mothers, with adolescent daughters, said that their daughters had indicated that they would be open to their parents making the initial introduction.

For the most part, participants did not come out straight away with their preference. Through talking about their concerns over marital harmony and family culture, they eventually stated that their preference was for their child to marry another Indian American. I do not know whether this initial reluctance to explicitly state their preference was in response to my racial

position (a white woman married to an Indian American,) or simply reluctance to be perceived as parents who would dictate their child's marriage. Consider Bimal's account.

Bimal: I wouldn't be against like if he let's say was to be seeing a Chinese girl or a Caucasian. I feel that the person he's dating or just seeing has [to have] a great personality. I mean, I wouldn't object to that. But, the thing is, I'm also aware that even girls amongst the Indian community, some wonderful personalities, some are very difficult individuals. So, marriage is always a bit of a gamble. It's all about compromise. I guess, like my parents, they said, "You're marrying an Indian girl and that's it. I don't want to hear anything else." I'm flexible in that regard but, I would tell them from day one that, "Look, don't just assume that if you marry outside the culture, it will be easy because there will be issues with things. Food will be different and lifestyles will be different and whatnot. There will be a lot more compromising now to be done because you grew up in a type of social setting. The person of a different culture had a different setting so, that just makes it a lot more difficult but, it could be very rewarding at the same time. So, just be aware of the issue [compromise]."

In this excerpt, Bimal covered three themes about marriage. Overall, he communicated his intent to be flexible on his son's prospective marriage partner. At the same, he was very pragmatic in that there are guarantee on marital harmony. Marrying co-ethnic does not ensure the marriage will be conflict free. In the end, he views marrying a non-Indian as the bigger gamble. Bimal's intent is to be less restrictive than his parents. He does not disagree with his parents on marrying a co-ethnic, he is adjusting his parenting style based on their approach.

For the parents who explicitly stated a preference for their child's marriage partner, they sometimes discussed how specific they could be in describing the person.

Arjun: Initially, I would say probably an Indian just because of – and again, I don't know how things are going to be 15 years from now or whatever, but it's just for the [culture]. I just feel like it's not fair to one when they go into another situation and feel like the outsider. Ideally, it'd be great if he could marry a [ancestral state] girl, but I'm just going to say Indian, just because the cultural [aspect].

The first-generation parents approached their children's marriage with very specific parameters. When I conducted my thesis study, second-generation participants reported that their parents preferred for them to marry someone from the same Indian state and same caste. Given the concern about losing their culture in the United States, I would have thought first-generation parents would be relieved if their child would simply marry anyone Indian or Indian American. In my current study, Mansi described this logic for her children.

Mansi: I think my preference would be, again, an Indian person. I think given the fact that there are a lot of Indian people now compared to when we were growing up, my preference is Indian, but I think to even specify the caste, personally right now, I feel like that would be very difficult. So, just right now, I would say Indian.

Because the importance of the family takes precedence over the preferences of the individual, marrying someone with similar family background maintains consistency in the family's culture. For most of the Indian Americans, caste functions very different than perhaps the textbook definition. In India, lower castes (i.e., the untouchables) continue to work against inequality in society. However, for the urbanized Indian middle-class, social class has supplanted caste (Sharma 1999). Many middle-class Indians have lost any relevance for caste membership in their social activities or relationships (p. 68). Thus, marrying someone from the same caste may relate more to consistency in family ritual than maintaining social boundaries. First-generation Indian American parents attempted to introduce their second-generation children to prospective marriage partners from the same caste. As parents, my participants generally downplayed or dismissed the relevance of caste. Mansi believes she will have to sacrifice caste and be satisfied simply that her children married another Indian American. For Mansi, marrying within the same caste establishes the most familiarity between families. Hence, she is not implying that she supports maintaining a system of social inequality.

Mostly, parents discussed the connection to the community. Marrying a co-ethnic ensures ties to the community remain. Satish explained their preference in the following manner.

Satish: I mean, selfishly, if I have to be happy, an Indian would be a better way because I would relate to their family better. So, I'm being self centered here.

Heera expressed similar views:

Heera: I think it would be easier. It is easier if they marry Indians but, it's not such a transition for me to really understanding somebody who's American at all. But, more in the sense that I see where I have cousins that are half [Indian] and I feel like one culture always dominates. So, for me, I see it more in the future of their [Sheela's children] children than for themselves. We live in the US; obviously the American culture dominates no matter what. I feel like a lot of the Indianess is going to be diluted even more. So for that reason more than for my own children, but they're in touch with Indian stuff. I don't want great-grandchildren who don't know what India is like, have never been there, that kind of thing.

Both parents prefer that their children maintain connections to the Indian community because that will ensure connections to them. Certainly, as second-generation Indian American, Heera can relate to someone non-Indian. However, her concern is that future generations will not have a connection to her ethnic identity. Interestingly, by stating that she can relate to mainstream American culture, Heera assumed the other marital option is a native born American. Only five parents stated potential partners who would be undesirable. Given the racial ethnic hierarchy in the United States, one parent stated that if his child married a non-Indian, he would prefer that the person be a white American. Four Hindu parents specifically stated that they would prefer their children not marry a Muslim. The reason for this religious exclusion was explained as "too different." The difference in cultures was the only reason mentioned. One mother did say that she was concern about the family pressure to convert to Islam. She noted that if a girl marries into a Muslim family, the family expects the girl to convert. Hindus, she

explained, do not require anyone to convert to Hinduism. Nonetheless, the parents' expectation is that the non-Hindu will participate in the family rituals.

Like their parents, second-generation parents want their family culture to be understood and appreciated too. The concern is that there will be a dominating culture. Jay explained his concern in this manner:

Jay: I don't know if I want to say like I prefer it [marrying another Indian] but, I definitely want whoever the person is, the person to accept the cultures. I don't want the person to be a Jewish person and say our kids are not going to be Indian. They're going to be Jewish. You know, "I don't really want to do any of your traditional things." That, I would be completely against [my thinking.]

White American mainstream culture is "cultureless," so, the concern is that the parent cannot find shared cultural experiences. With a person perceived as outside mainstream culture, such as a Muslim or a Jew, the concern is that their culture will "trump" Indian culture. While the parents may not relate to the non-Indian, the assumption is that the non-Indian would participate in the Indian American community. Thus, the cultureless American is adopting a culture. However, if the person already has a culture (i.e., Jewish) than the concern is that their child would have to participate more in that family culture than the Indian American community. Trisha was one of the few who described conversations that she has had with her children concerning their marriage.

Trisha: See, it's not that the kids have to marry Indian. I guess the preference is there, if not for any other reason, just to maybe keep the culture more alive. I feel that just going from my parents to me, that's become slightly less. From me, going to the kids may have become slightly less, and I guess the more you integrate and you move slowly away from it. I know that we're never going to live again in India. That's not an option, and forget the kids ever doing that.

Taresh: Maybe.

Trisha: It's how you were raised. [It is] the thought process and everything. So, my thing is that I would prefer that, but I'm not going to say it has to be. And sometimes the kids will say, "mom, you're so prejudiced." And I'll be, "no, I'm not prejudiced." That's a strong term to use. But yeah, definitely. If we're all sitting around and I just start talking about something or this person or that person, if you bring somebody else into the family, now, before I approach that topic, I'll be like, "oh, if I talk about that, they won't know what I'm talking about or they won't be interested." Little things like that that are really dumb things. They're not really big things, but [it matters].

First, Trisha reinforced the boundary between "us" and "them." She said her children do not have to marry Indian; she meant Indian American. Second-generation Indian Americans do see themselves as separate from mainstream culture- an almost insular group. Indian culture is defined by so much more than clothes, music, and food; it is pervasive in the lives of the members of the group. Trisha's account offers another glimpse into the integration of Indian culture and how the cognitive distinction between the two cultures is not easily articulated.

CONCLUSION

Community is situated more in the private space of ethnicity in contrast to the more visible displays of Indian culture. To some extent, utilizing particular cultural objects are associated with symbolic ethnicity, but my participants do not feel compelled to engage in these well-known cultural objects and experiences simply because they are Indian American. I am not describing a false consciousness where people are eating Indian food, but do not really like it. I assert that visible cultural objects such as food, language, and clothing are associated with this particular group as their "public" face-- the well known representations of culture in the United States. Ethnic identity has a social aspect and these objects easily convey that difference within American mainstream culture. At the same time, my participants feel that there is an essential

quality to being Indian American. Not easily articulated, but resting on values that are different- and perhaps superior- to American mainstream society. Their connection to the community integrates this essentialness of Indian culture.

A community can be, literally, a territorial region or it can be more relational (Griswold 2004). India, basically, is the territorial region, but it is also a relational community. Griswold (2004) describes relational communities are connected through “webs of communication, friendship, association, or mutual support” (p. 154). The transnational community meets this definition as well. Both the local and transnational communities provide a social relationship for people who share similar history, present, and future life course experiences.

Maintaining a connection to the community is central sharing traditions and involving children in Indian culture. The local community is very specific, though. Typically, parents participate in social networks comprised of other second-generation Indian Americans. In this way, they are involving their children with other Indian Americans who share similar cultural experiences. Ethnic groups cannot be insular in their social interactions. Obviously, Indian Americans integrated into mainstream American society. Thus, the Indian American community is not meant to be an exclusive ethnic enclave, but rather a way to revitalize and connect with co-ethnics and share their culture with their third-generation children.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

When I began this project, I envisioned a theoretical conclusion that would reveal how second-generation Indian American parents construct an ethnic identity for their third-generation children. The second-generation fathers and mothers were never socialized to Indian culture in India, so how do they construct an ethnic identity for their sons and daughters? My research provides insight into the negotiation of hegemonic discourses of Indian culture and American culture. By exploring second-generation parenting, I provide a context for understanding ethnic identity construction, but in a way that avoids reducing Indian culture to bounded set of objects and experiences.

If one measures assimilation by integration into public institutions such as school, residential communities, and employment, then the second-generation Indian Americans appear fairly assimilated into mainstream society. If assimilation is measured by acculturation of values and norms of the United States, then the second-generation Indian Americans can be said to achieved this level of assimilation too (Purkayastha 2005). Rather than focus on effects of assimilation into mainstream American society, however, I sought to explore how second-generation Indian Americans conceive of “Indianness.” What is missing from the dialogue about assimilation is how Indian Americans revitalize Indian culture in the United States.

When people live in ethnic neighborhoods, there is no need to articulate “identity” (Gans 1979). Hence, the first-generation parents did not necessarily face the dilemma of expressing “being Indian” in the United States, because they grew up in India. The second-generation to some extent seeks to “anchor ethnicity” to experiences and objects in the United States. (Gans

1979: 435). These actions or mechanisms were not always apparent or tangible. “Culture” is integrated across different aspects of family life.

Through theoretical refinement, I sought to extend an Orientalist view of ethnic identity. Rather than rely on this theoretical perspective to explain the power dynamic in negotiating an Indian American identity, I used this perspective to highlight differences in cultural discourse. Although a cultural power dynamic certainly exists between the United States and India, I focused on the hegemonic practices in ethnic identity construction. For example, second-generation Indian American women were likely to report that they would not wear traditional Indian clothing outside of an Indian cultural function (i.e., the grocery store or non-Indian dinner party). Additionally, second-generation Indian Americans made distinction between first-generation Indian Americans (as two participants referred to as “the typical Indian”) and their perceived more Americanized identity. Undeniably a cultural power dynamic exists and my participants were aware of this. However, American cultural dominance also highlights difference. The cultural objects and experiences incorporated into the family’s culture tended to be perceived as “different” from mainstream American culture.

I began with marriage tales as a way to explore the importance of Indian culture in family formation. Marrying a co-ethnic is the strongest way to maintain connections to the Indian American community. Although arranged marriages are viewed negatively by mainstream society, none of my participants explicitly indicated that they distanced themselves from this Indian tradition. Marrying a co-ethnic is a demonstration of hegemonic Indian culture. My study revealed the patterns in what it means to my participants “to be Indian.” Marrying outside of culture negates one’s Indianness.

Religion linked families to the culture and to the greater Indian community. Maintaining Hinduism in the family is another example of how second-generation Indian Americans deliberately incorporate difference in the family culture in order to make the distinction between them and mainstream Americans. Moreover, religion is conflated with ethnic identity. This conflation was not only demonstrated by literal accounts, but also by the participants' efforts to worship with other second-generation Indian Americans.

Negotiating hegemonic culture, for my participants, involved a certain degree of awareness of their social location in the racial-ethnic hierarchy of the United States.

As Vijay explained:

You see the influence of the culture [Indian] on not just the country but, the world. So, you learn. You say, "Wow, you're part of that culture." You want to know more about it. You want to be able to express it and say what it is. You find yourself talking about it more, and the people around you talk about it more. At least in this area, they see more and more Indians. So you have friends asking -- when people [other Indians] come here, they [non-Indians] have different questions. They would ask me about it. And in some cases, I didn't know and I would feel a little bit like maybe I should know or at least have some knowledge of it. The fact that they expect me to know it just because I'm Indian, I could turn around and say to them, "do you know who the Italian sixteenth century artist was?" They probably wouldn't know either, but it also got me to think a little bit saying how much do I really know about my own culture? I should try to know more about it a little bit.

Playing the "cultural ambassador" emerged from this tendency of mainstream society's request that Indian Americans demonstrate ethnicity. My participants were called upon to perform ethnicity in the public space and, to some extent, they are "constrained" by this public identity (Dhingra 2007: 227). Mainstream society does not overly determine identity, but tends to have a fixed image of Indian Americans. The cultural ambassador illustrates a power dynamic between India and the United States (i.e., Western culture). Belsey (2002) interprets this notion

of power in social relations by pointing out that any time knowledge or instruction is given it involves a power dynamic. “Anyone who tells or shows anyone else how to do something is exerting power over them. This is not a matter of intention or wish. The transmission of knowledge involves instruction; learning entails submission” (p. 54). Paradoxically, playing the cultural ambassador does not give the Indian American more power in this particular context. The dynamic is more like the student teaching the teacher. The non-Indian believes he or she is entitled to make inquiries of the Indian American- as though the Indian American is required to explain his or her ethnic difference. The overarching question is, “How Indian are you?”

The family constitutes a private field of action. Community involvement emerged as a vital conduit for teaching and maintaining the family’s culture. The links to different communities (local and transnational) are integrated within the micro-level or the private space of the family culture. Communities expose second- and third-generation Indian Americans to others members of the ethnic group. These interactions strengthen identity and fortify a sense of who they are. Participants did express the importance of the transnational community in their lives and especially as a necessary experience for their third-generation children’s sense of ethnic identity. On the other hand, the importance of their social network was not as apparent. These networks simply represented their “friends.” The local community reinforced their identity and socialized third-generation children to a specific Indian culture. Thus, parents are maintaining a particular mix of Indian and American experiences.

In general, parents preferred that their third-generation children marry another Indian American to maintain a connection to the community. This connection represents a continuity of culture across generations. Marrying a co-ethnic would mean that grand-parents and second-generation parents can have a shared culture with their child’s partner. While many studies,

mine included, reveal how Indian culture is integrated across different social contexts in the present, the second-generation parents also seek to maintain continuity across the past and the future.

Exploring mothering and fathering revealed the micro-level aspects of the family's culture. Mothers were largely responsible for maintaining the visible cultural objects, such as food, clothing, and language. Drawing attention to these few objects is not meant to represent an exhaustive list; they are examples of intensive mothering. Second-generation mothers negotiate their mother's culture as well as cultural hegemony concerning motherhood. Stay-at-home mothers in my study took pride in their total devotion to childrearing. Similarly, the mothers who participated in paid employment worked hard to balance work and family.

The fathers in my study believed that they were in a different parenting context than their first-generation parents. They were more likely than the mothers to discuss this different context. Although the fathers did not view their fathers negatively, they believed that they were in a better position to provide for their children than their dads. This difference was mostly noted in cultural differences in parenting, more financial resources, and less worry about shouldering the family's well-being in a new country. Having noted this difference, the fathers in my study characterized their parenting style as a mix of Indian culture and their perceptions of American mainstream families. One important perception about mainstream American parenting that was addressed was family communication. Growing up, my participants, both mothers and fathers, tended to characterize communication with their parents as very perfunctory, avoiding any emotional content. However, with third-generation children, fathers sought to foster more open communication. Additionally, some of the fathers had concerns surrounding their sons' gender conformity or more specifically their sons' masculinity. This was one overt influence of

social class. The fathers demonstrated what Cooper (2000) calls the “new” masculinity. This representation associated with highly educated men. These men may have been the “nerd” in high school, but now they were using their cognitive prowess to achieve a more complex work with higher occupational prestige.

Hegemonic practices construct all social identities, including social class (Trofing 1999). The participants in my study are fairly affluent, I found that social class intersects with ethnicity to create a multi-dimensional habitus. This field of action includes the economic resources as well as the cultural capital associated with higher social class. To some extent, parents wield their Indian American identity to broaden and enhance cultural capital for their children. I found the parents in my study to be very focused on parenting. Nelson (2010) used the expression, “parenting out of control,” to refer to the particular ways in which upper middle-class parents “put child rearing front and center,” no matter how hectic their schedules become (p. 6). The end goal is to facilitate life opportunities that will allow children to grow up to be the best that they can be. That is, affluent parents recognize the boundless potential of their children. Consequently, the most important goal of parenting is to facilitate the pursuit of the child’s potential through broad range of opportunities to augment education, communication, cultural, and social skills.

For example, parents structured children’s leisure time by formal activities (sports or music lessons) or simply shaping the playtime in the home. Five parents explicitly discussed how they restricted the hours that their children watched television, though more may have supervised the quantity and quality of television usage.

Leah: I basically started raising my children while preparing for an academic career. Then actually teaching freshman, I felt like I saw –

Lokesh: The adverse effects of TV –

- Leah: The atrophy of minds due to video games and television.
- Lokesh: So right now, she watches probably 30 minutes of *Sesame Street* a day during the weekdays, and every two days or so, she'll watch 30 minutes of a *Dora* episode.

In general, the parents in my study were intent on providing a variety of cognitive activities.

Typically, educational excellence surfaced as a primary focus in the second-generation Indian American family.

- Anu: I know that he's [son] passionate about it, so I'm allowing him to go through that experience. I think academics is more important than sports. I don't want him to resent me for stopping him from doing that, but there are times where I feel like he's losing sight of his academics because of the sports.

In this excerpt, Anu alluded to the importance of educational attainment. She also revealed the non-authoritarian manner in which she approached this dilemma. Her son's feelings are also important. Rather than dictate that he must stop sport activities, she acknowledged the parent-child relationship is equally important.

Using economic resources to ensure the best education is probably expected, but affluent parents go beyond simply searching for the best private school. These parents understand the relationship between social class and education. My participants have a history of pursuing academic excellence to improve life chances. Often referred to as the model minority, Indian Americans have the highest educational attainment of all U.S. citizens. Many first-generation Indian Americans immigrated to the United States to pursue educational opportunities. Not surprising, second-generation Indian American parents continue this educational legacy. When I asked Nikhil if he and his wife discussed parenting styles before they became parents, he responded with the following.

What kind of parents are we going to be? Are we going to be strict or lenient or this or that? I think some of the same things are important to both of us anyway, like well, which are to most Indians, but they've got to be – I hope -- they're smart and even if they're not smart, they have to have an education.

Educational attainment may be more important than being “smart,” but Nikhil most likely understands the relationship between education and social class. A college education is one avenue to increase earning potential and maintain affluence.

The educational attainment of the parents is directly related to the depth of communication and actual time engaged with children. Nelson (2010) and Lareau (2003) both found this trend prevalent in their studies. This particular parenting style was one way that upper middle-class parents differ from working-class and poorer parents. In the following excerpt, Nita described the open communication style she was cultivating with her three year old sons.

Like if I'm upset and I say something to [my husband], my kids will come to me and they'll be like, “Momma, you're upset at Daddy. Why?” And, I'll tell them. I'll be like, “Well, I wanted him to do this and he hasn't and that's why. I'm not really, you know, annoyed.” But every time I'm upset, they will openly tell me. They're like, “you're upset at us. Why?” Or, “you're upset at him. Why?”, they ask. I tell them even things that some people are like, no, you shouldn't be telling them. [My in-laws] got very upset with both of us because we told them no Christmas gifts. We went to [visit them] for Christmas and they gave them [children] the gifts and we left them [with my in-laws]. I guess she [mother-in-law] got very offended and she was annoyed about it. I told the kids, I said, “You guys don't have any toys in [state where in-laws live]. You have so many cars over here [at home], so we'll leave them there so you can play with them [when you are there] and your cousins can play with them. We have more toys at home.” They understood it and they said fine and I asked them, I said, “Is that fine?” And they were okay with it. So we came back and his [husband's] parents were really pissed off about it.

His dad called and they were upset. So we were talking [and] the kids overheard [their father] on the phone and they always ask, “What are you talking to Dad about?” So, I told them. I told them that their grandparents were upset and this was the reason why, you know, then they said, “Oh, okay, we'll tell Grandpa and Grandma not to be upset so we can go to

Michigan and play with our toys.” I said okay. And, so what happened, I think a week later his father called. One of the twins, he actually talked to him [father-in-law]. The first thing he said, “Are you upset at my Mom and my Dad?” He’s a child, but I mean a lot of people said, “No, you shouldn’t have told them that.” And, his parents were upset with me for telling -- you know, don’t discuss your relationships-- if we have fights with them-- with the kids. You know, they [sons] asked me what it was about and I feel that they understand what we talk about and so I just feel it’s better to be upfront with them.

This excerpt demonstrates the complexities of family communication. Parent-child communication involves understanding complex adult relationships. It was not simply that Nita had open communication with her sons, but that she was teaching them to have mature emotional relationships. She was appealing to their cognitive ability to understand the dynamic of the situation. Among upper middle-class parents, exceptional communication skills are cultivated in children (Lareau 2003; Nelson 2010). They make efforts to appeal to the cognitive development of the children, especially in the area of discipline. Analysis of the interview transcripts did not provide a clear picture of how my participants approach disciplining their children. While I believe that my participants disciplined their children, I did not get the impression that spanking was a common practice. Parents tended to communicate discipline in terms of their efforts to ensure that their children understood why their behavior was unacceptable. Almost all parents, however, did rely on time-outs and restricting usage to favorite toy as discipline.

Children are a work in progress. More specifically, affluent parents believe that their children are “in process” where their ultimate character and accomplishments are not a foregone conclusion (Nelson 2010: 89). My participants generally discussed their children’s adult outcomes as though they expect them to be anything they want to be. Whatever the children

ended up doing, there was an implied view that they would be academically successful, nonetheless. For example, Anish discussed his approach to raising his son.

I used to tell my son, I'm just waiting for you to grow up. He goes, "But I'm taller than you." I said, "No, I really want you to grow up because you're still so immature." Even though, you know, there's so many things that is mature. We'd have conversations on that. But yeah, I mean it's really interesting when they get to 16, 17 [years old]. I'm sure that's true with every parent --whether they're Indian or non-Indian-- in terms of what to say to them. Because at some point of their life, they always think that they're right. I know I thought like that when I was younger.

I mean, certain things – it is what it is at a certain point. You know, you start taking everything with a grain of salt whether you should listen a bit more intently. Later on into life, when you're married, you know, you start to see their [parents'] wisdom and all that. But it's – unfortunately, it comes way late in life. You start realizing, because now you're starting to interact with not just your friends from high school or college, but in the professional workplace. You're starting to see the differences. And I think that's true for everybody that you start acting and dressing differently and whatnot. Everything is not as carefree. The reason I'm bringing this up is because you want them to be a little bit more professional and a little bit more, you know, polished. But, it just doesn't happen at that age, you know, 16, 17, 18. That's why I told him, you know, just waiting for you to grow up because, I know from experience that you just can't really push it. It's gonna happen when it happens. But I do keep telling them, you know, you've got to stop telling your friends or yourself that this is the way I am. And so, you know, you're going to have to want to change, otherwise you'll never change.

This father is engaged in cultivated life lessons. Anish wants his son to be more “polished” or mature. Perhaps Anish is ready to have more of a friend or peer relationship with his son -- another common characteristic of affluent parents.

The parents in my study also discussed their thoughts on the future occupation of their children. Paresh and Priyum discussed their preferences for their children's future occupations.

That's something we talk about, and I think we're partially joking about, but what would we want them to be when they grow up. And I'm always like, okay, well, we're going to let them be what they want to be. We talk about [how] it would be nice if somebody was a doctor, or [our daughter]

was in business, like following in my footsteps. [Our son] would have it, I think based on his personality. He's more of like the networker and he's like a charmer and that type of thing. And she's more of a like a serious type of a person. So, it could be the exact opposite. They could both go act or something, something very random. But, at the end of the day, we both decided let them do what they're going to do. [Whatever] makes them happy.

While they ultimately advocate their children's happiness above all else, there is a subtle implication to the kinds of careers they believe are likely for their children. The notion of being a doctor or a career in business is contrasted to something completely "random" like acting. Thus, within the hope that their children will end up in a profession that makes them happy, the implication is that the parents predict that the career choice will be very similar to their own professions.

Lareau (2003) study used the term "concerted cultivation" to describe the same devoted and often times intense parenting style. Affluent parents incorporated a dominant set of cultural repertoires about how children should be raised into their own parenting style (p. 4). Thus, there exists a cultural hegemony concerning what engaged and devoted parents should do for their children. My participants communicated similar views. Their perceptions of an engaged and devoted parent in the United States guided their parenting styles.

One obvious conclusion from my study is to say second-generation Indian Americans are a blend of American and Indian cultures. My participants are indeed a hybrid of identity in the United States, but this is too superficial; this point needs further elaboration. Critically analyzed, a hybrid ethnic identity is neither Indian nor American. Essentially, it describes people who live in the borderlands. That is, Indian Americans live in the space created by American and Indian culture (Anzaldua 1987). Growing up, second-generation Indian Americans "negotiate" the mix of both cultures. In this sense, they are constantly in flux-- moving between the two "worlds"

and attempting to find some kind of complete sense of self, an identity. My participants presented a cohesive and grounded sense of Indian American identity. As a community, they were united by a culture. Although they may not have complete agreement, there was a consistency in the interpretation of Indian American culture. My primary contribution to extant literature is extending our understanding of how second-generation Indian Americans shape an ethnic identity and how this identity is maintained for third-generation children. Using a poststructural framework, I underscore how my participants negotiated difference as well as sameness to construct Indian American ethnic identity within their families. Additionally, while the parents in my study considered maintaining Indian culture for their children important, they did not believe that, as adults, their children would continue to maintain Indian culture. In other words, my participants acknowledge and accept their children's agency in shaping their own identity. First-generation Indian American parents were overly concerned about transferring culture to their children. As new immigrants to the United States, they were relying on the cultural norms and values that they socialized to in India. Consequently, they were much more concerned about their children maintaining a connection with the Indian American community. For the most part, my participants are parenting in a different social context. Their approach to parenting represents how enduring cultural patterns can be, yet also dynamic to accommodate the diverse social landscape of the United States.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

I focus on three primary conclusions from my study that hold positive implications for future research. The first area addresses the intersection of ethnicity and social class. All of my participants were upper-middle class. Within the field of action, how does social class influence

ethnicity? Because of brown skin and non-Anglo sounding names, members of the dominant group ascribe ethnicity status to Indian Americans. Regardless of whether they are accurately identified as Indian American or some other ethnicity, they are nonetheless faced with mandatory ethnicity. Within this designation, how much flexibility can Indian Americans experience?

Social class may impact the degree of flexibility in two ways. First, more economic resources allow second-generation parents to expose their third-generation children to culture in ways that poorer parents cannot provide. For example, they can afford Hindu school and trips to India. Additionally, some families can afford to hire Indian American nannies to reinforce the family's culture. Affluence impacts the cultural capital Indian Americans can acquire and consequently impact the ways that Indian Americans can express ethnicity. For example, the more affluent can afford better quality of traditional clothing, jewelry, or home decorations. Moreover, the more affluent Indian Americans are likely work and reside in areas with similarly affluent non-Indians. Within these environments, Indian American culture may be more appreciated and understood than in less affluent areas (i.e. lower educational attainment).

My research highlights the need for further study of the intersection of fatherhood and ethnicity. Specifically, there needs to be further research on Indian American fatherhood. Despite my dilemma of not locating research on this topic, fatherhood among the second-generation parents needs to be understood for their specific location in the racial-ethnic hierarchy in the United States. By exploring fatherhood among second-generation parents of color, family sociologists may be able to gain a perspective on the challenges these fathers encounter as well as parenting styles that might be unique to this generation of Americans.

The last area for future research focuses on the issue of immigration. While comparative studies do exist, research does not appear to have consistency across generations. In other words,

compare second-generation families with other second-generation families in the United States. Since 1965, there has been research on the first-generation of immigrants, but less on subsequent generations. By comparing ethnic groups by corresponding generations, perhaps we can reveal the impacts of U.S. immigration policy and as well as mainstream American response to immigration.

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APPENDIX

Interview Guide: Conjoint Interview

Subject # _____ (#a and #b) Date _____

Pseudonyms _____

City and State _____

A. Marriage

1. How did you meet each other?
(Probe to determine where, when, and how.)
2. Probe to find out to what extent parents were involved.
("arranged" or not "arranged")
3. How did your relationship develop?
(Probe to find out if they dated)
4. What do you remember about your wedding?
(What was your wedding like? Where was the ceremony and reception held?)

B. Gender Patterns

1. Who does what in the house?
Probe to reveal division of: housework, childcare, social activities, and financial activities. Probe to determine who primarily feeds, dresses, helps with homework, extracurricular activities, etc...
2. Who has the more flexible work schedule?
3. Describe your parenting styles.
Probe to determine degree of agreement in discipline, religion, culture, etc...

C. Parenting Culture

1. What language do you speak in the house?

2. Do you teach your child your particular Indian language(s)?
3. Do you cook Indian food?
4. Are you a part of an Indian community?
Probe to determine strength of network. What kind of events and how often are the events? Probe for details concerning which holidays are celebrated in the family. (example, Divali, Navratri, Holi, rakhi, teej, Christmas, Thanksgiving.) Probe to find out if gossip is an issue.
5. Do you watch Bollywood films?
Probe to determine if Bollywood films are family event. What do parents tell children about the film content? How frequent to they watch the films?
6. What do you tell your children about their culture?
Probe to determine significance of culture. Are children expected to marry in culture?
7. How important is caste for you?
Probe to determine caste for each participant. Probe to determine importance of caste for their parents.
8. [If age appropriate] Who are your children's friends?
Probe to determine if primary peers are Indian? Non-Indian?
9. Where do your parents live? [If appropriate] Do they come for visits?
If so, how long?)
10. When did you last visit India? Do you intend to visit India any time soon?
If appropriate, probe to determine frequency of visits or how long he/she lived in India. (Probes concerning marriage will establish whether participant has been to India.)
11. Do you anticipate taking care of an aging parent? If so, who and why or why not?
Probe to determine if patterns are similar to India (i.e. patrilocal)

D. Cultural Representations and Racism

1. Do you think Indians are well represented in advertising, TV, and film?
2. What do you think about these representations?
Probe to reveal views about stereotypes.
3. Do you think that these representations reflect a general attitude towards Indians in

the United States? Probe to for views of racism in the U.S.

4. Have you ever experienced racism?
Probe for details concerning social context. Probe to determine if their children have experienced racism.
5. Do you think Indian culture in terms marriage, clothing, food, etc... are portrayed in a positive or negative way?
Probe for any cultural markers that are displayed or omitted around non-Indians.
6. Have these cultural representations had a direct effect in your life?
Probe for interactions with non-Indians in employment, neighbors, friends, parenting, etc..
7. Concerning media images, do you feel that you are sometimes an “ambassador” to Indian culture?
8. What do you or what do you plan to explain to your children about what Americans think about Indian culture?

E. Religion

1. Are you religious?
2. To which group do you identify?
3. How important is religion in your family?
Probe to determine difference from childhood versus now.
4. Where do you worship? (home, temple, church?)
5. Are your religious views similar (between spouses?)
6. Which religious holidays do you observe?
7. How do you teach your child(ren) about religion?

F. Demographics (If not only collected, pose the following questions)

1. How long have you been married?
2. How many children do you have?

3. What are the ages?
4. How long have you lived at your current address?
5. Do you have any other family in area? (who and where)
6. What state in India are you from or your parents from?
7. Where were each of you born?
8. When did you immigrate to the U.S?
9. What is the highest level of education you have attained?
10. What is your occupation?

QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Life Course Interview Questions and Topics

Subject # _____ (Refer to Joint interview) Date _____

Pseudonym _____ (Refer to Joint interview)

Gender _____

A. Demographics

1. What is your occupation?
2. What is your age?
3. Were you born in the U.S.?
4. If not born in the U.S., how old were you when your family immigrated?
5. When did your parents immigrate?
6. Why did your parents immigrate?
7. What are the occupations of your parents?
8. What is the highest level of education attained by your parents?

B. Childhood

1. Where was the first house you can remember living in?
How long did you live there?
2. Do you remember your friends? (Indian, non-Indian)
3. Did you attend Indian community events?
4. Were there Indians in your school, neighborhood?
5. Did you have birthday parties?
6. Did you have sleep-overs?

7. Did you go to your Prom?
8. Did you participate in extra-curricular activities - sports, music, dance?
9. Did you date?
Probe for specific activities and any differences by gender.
10. Could you socialize with kids of the opposite sex?
Probe for gender differences and differences across Indian and non-Indian friends.

C. Parents

1. What language did your parents speak in the house?
2. Do you consider your parents to be religious?
3. Did you feel that your parents' let you do the things non-Indian kids in your school could do?
4. Did your parents ever tell you that you were becoming too Western?
Probe for intergeneration differences.
5. Do you feel that maintaining Indian culture was important for your parents?

D. College years

1. Did you choose your college and major?
2. Did you live away from your parents?
3. Who were your friends in college?
4. Were you involved with Indian cultural activities in college?
Probe for any increased interest or participation in Indian culture.

E. Marriage

1. When you were young, at what age did you think you'd get married?
2. How did you envision you would meet your spouse?
3. Did your parents' envision your marriage in the way that you did?
4. Do you consider your marriage egalitarian?

Probe for meaning of egalitarian relationship.

F. Parenting

1. Did you want to have children (If so, how many)?
2. What does family mean to you?
Probe to find out who is part of the family.
3. How are the household chores divided?
Probe to determine who does what and how often.
5. How are the parenting activities divided?
Probe to determine who does what and how often.
6. Do you and your spouse agree on how to raise children?
7. Do you consider yourself religious? And are you raising your children the same way?
8. How similar are you and your spouse's parenting styles similar to how your parents raised you?
9. How important is Indian culture in raising your children?